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Joint Christian Reformed/Catholic conference yields 'a time to talk' about abuse



Janet MacNeil (left) and Beth Swagman shared biblical stories of abuse at the Edmonton conference.

Cheryl L. Martin

EDMONTON — On a Friday evening in early November a group of people from a variety of denominations met to begin a time of education and a time of discussion, a time of reflection and a time of analysis. It was "a time to talk."

The conference, "A Time To Talk: Towards Abuse Free Church Communities," addressed emotional, physical, sexual and spiritual abuse.

Almost 150 pastors, deacons, church representatives and other interested persons attended were there at the Grey Nuns Conference Centre on Nov. 6 and 7. Unusually, the conference was co-sponsored by the Northern Alberta Diaconal Conference Task Group on Abuse Prevention and the Social Justice Commission of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Edmonton.

Those who attended Friday evening's opening presentation and address came away with something to talk about. Attendees recognized the pain and the turmoil abuse causes and were prepared to talk the next day about triumphing over abuse through healing and prevention.

Janet MacNeil of Lacombe, Alberta, opened with the tale, told through the eyes of a loving friend, of a biblical daughter betrayed by her father Jephthah, an Old Testament judge. The story's emotional impact was clear from the silence that followed.

A group of drama students from The King's University College, under the direction of Daniel Van Heyst, performed four sketches as an introduction to the kinds of abuse. The presentation powerfully portrayed violence in a marriage, the growth of a young girl into womanhood, the story of an abused daughter and the confessions of a father. One attendee commented, "What a great way to introduce the abuse theme and get us all emotionally engaged in a non-demanding way."

'King for a day'

Beth Swagman, director of the Christian Reformed Church's Abuse Prevention Committee, called her keynote speech "If I Could Be King for a Day." She began with the story

of Tamar and Amnon from 2 Samuel. King David, she said, was the most powerful man of his day, yet when his son assaulted another of his children, a

daughter, he did nothing.

Swagman outlined the steps she would have taken if she were "king for a day," and the See CHURCHES page 2...

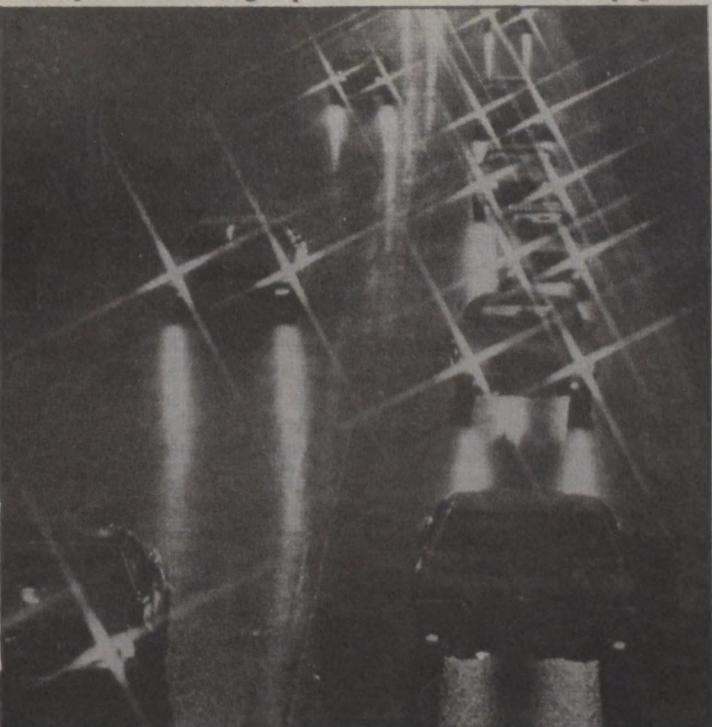
Harmful sulphur content in gas to be reduced

Alan Doerksen

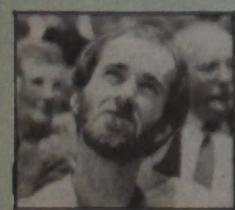
HULL, Quebec — Reducing the sulphur content in gasoline could prevent 2,100 premature deaths, 93,000 incidences of bronchitis in children, and five million other health-related incidents such as asthma attacks over 20 years, according to a federal-provincial work group.

These are some reasons why the federal government has introduced new rules to cut down drastically on the level of sulphur in gasoline over the next seven years.

In late October, Environment Minister Christine Stewart and Health Minister Allan Rock See CANADIAN page 2...



Sulphur pollution from cars causes serious illnesses such as bronchitis.



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News

Churches should prevent spiritual abuse

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steps a church should take when faced with an abusive situation. "I will never be a king," she said in closing, "not even for a day. And neither will any of you." But the clear implication of her message was that we can all follow, in our own churches, our homes and our lives in general the steps she outlined.

Many attendees came away from that evening prepared to talk. The next day offered an opportunity. Dr. Ken Blue spoke

about "Understanding and Preventing Spiritual Abuse." His stance included a broad definition of spiritual abuse as any time the church places obstacles between a believer and God. This happens, he said, when the church lays unnecessary burdens on its members, as if the grace that we have in Christ is not free.

Dr. Blue, exegeting Matthew 23, challenged attendees to identify those obstacles which stand in the way of us coming

to Christ.

Many workshops offered everything from discussing healing and healthy relationships to understanding the offender. The conference was not only a place of education for church members but also a safe place for abuse survivors. Volunteer counsellors and prayer partners were available. A closing, "Towards Abuse-Free Church Communities," was facilitated by Beth Swagman.

Canadian sulphur pollution levels among world's highest

... continued from page 1

announced the new rules, which will lower the sulphur content in gasoline to an average level of 30 parts per million (ppm) with a maximum of 80 ppm. This is a 90 per cent reduction from average levels today in Canada. The change will be phased in over several years, with sulphur levels lowered to a 150 ppm average in 2002 and to 30 ppm in 2005, to allow the petroleum industry time to adjust.

Levels too high

"Canadians, especially the young and elderly, are suffering from bad air in our cities and need this regulation," says Stewart. "Our process has been thorough, open and inclusive. We have engaged health and environmental organizations, the provinces, industry and other stakeholders. This has led to a national consensus on the need to lower the sulphur content in gasoline."

Sulphur levels in gas average 360 ppm in Canada, among the highest in the world, according to Environment Canada. Ontario's rate is even higher, with an average in 1997 of 530 ppm.

The new regulations will bring Canadian sulphur levels in line with those in California, Japan and the European Union. The government estimates that the cost for the average motorist will be one cent per litre of gasoline, or \$20 per year per car.

According to Environment Canada, average sulphur levels

for other countries are:

- 310 ppm for the U.S. (but only 30 ppm for the state of California);
- 340 ppm for Britain;
- 160 to 230 ppm for Europe excluding Britain.

The European Union is setting a maximum sulphur level of 50 ppm, which will come into effect in 2005.

Sulphur occurs naturally in petroleum and causes emissions of sulphur dioxide. It also decreases the efficiency of emission control systems on cars, resulting in higher levels of other pollutants such as carbon monoxide.

Naturally, there is a cost involved with removing sulphur from gas. The government estimates the petroleum industry will need to invest \$1.8 billion in equipment and \$119 million a year for supplies to run the equipment. But Environment Canada says that technology to remove sulphur from gas has been in use for several decades.

The Canadian Petroleum Products Institute (CPPI), which represents gas refiners and marketers, criticizes some aspects of the new rules. "We support the need to reduce sulphur levels in gas. We support the two-tiered approach," says Brendan Hawley, vice-president of public affairs for CPPI. But CPPI would prefer a longer time-line to adjust to the changes. "Our preference would be to having timing aligned with the U.S." explained Hawley.

Contrary to what the government says, Hawley claims there is no good technology available at this point to cut sulphur levels in gas as much as the new rules call for.

Hawley is critical of the government's estimate that gas prices will increase only \$20 a

year per car. "There are a lot of analysts who say that number is naive," he asserts. In California, which already has a 30 ppm sulphur level for gas, the price of gas is 10 to 12 cents per gallon higher than in the rest of the U.S., he says.

Gradual okay

Peter Mahaffy, a professor of chemistry at The King's University College in Edmonton, describes the new rules on sulphur content in gas as "an important step as part of the overall clean-air strategy of the Environment Department."

Sulphur in gasoline is dangerous to the environment and to human health in several ways, Mahaffy explains. "Sulphur dioxide is one of the key substances in acid rain." And respiratory diseases such as bronchitis and asthma are linked to long-term exposure to sulphur dioxide, even at low levels, he asserts.

Mahaffy agrees with the government's gradual approach to lowering sulphur levels. "It takes quite a period of time for industry to respond. It would be difficult to achieve this over a shorter period of time." The petroleum industry will need "a whole new level of technology" to reduce sulphur levels, he says. "Regulations like this are always walking a tightrope between what's economically feasible and what's needed to ensure the health of Canadians."

California has long been a catalyst in encouraging the gas industry to cut pollutants in gasoline, says Mahaffy. For about 30 years, California has had "very strict rules on emissions from cars." In fact, some car manufacturers need to produce cars designed especially for California, he says.

Please note:

The music reviews on pages 8 and 9 of the Christmas Issue were written by Marian Van Til.

'A Time to Talk': the view of a survivor

Carol Janes (a pseudonym)

As a survivor of abuse, I was excited when I heard about the "Time to Talk" conference. To me it meant the church was acknowledging that abuse happens within its membership and that the church is taking action towards prevention.

I thought the conference was well-planned, with excellent speakers and dramatic presentations; for me, the drama productions brought up a lot of pain and other emotions. Ken Blue's keynote speech on spiritual abuse had a huge impact. I hadn't heard about spiritual abuse before. When I realized how much of this I had experienced in my life I came to a better understanding of my anger towards the church. I also feel that spiritual abuse is a breeding ground for other kinds of abuse.

Panel discussion a real let-down

I had trouble deciding which workshops to attend because I still struggle with my own healing, with wanting change and with reaching out to others in their pain. I found the panel discussion at the end of the conference a real letdown. I'm not sure if it was shortage of time or insufficient knowledge, but I felt the responses given by the panel regarding creating abuse-free church communities lacked depth and perception.

Abuse is such a diverse and broad area that a weekend conference allows one only to begin to understand its effects, paths to healing, and what needs to be done to prevent it. It became apparent to me how much more needs to be done in to educate and get people to acknowledge abuse in our church communities.

I was very disappointed that no one from the congregation in which I was born and raised was at the conference, but I was impressed with the participation of my present church community. The sense of caring and sharing, praising God and praying with other Christians who are aware there is a problem and who are concerned was simply amazing.

MTT embarrassment

Another pollutant the Canadian government has considered regulating is MMT, a manganese compound also contained in gasoline. But the government met a backlash recently when an American petroleum company, Ethyl Corp., successfully sued the government for \$20 million, under provisions of NAFTA (the North American Free Trade Agreement). Ethyl Corp. argued that Canadian regulations would have had a harmful effect on the American petroleum industry, says Mahaffy.

"There's not a lot of information on the long-term effects of manganese in the environment," comments Mahaffy. But he contends that this is "something that we should be studying very carefully." Mahaffy sees no connection between the failure of the government's MMT regulations and the introduction of new sulphur limits. "My sense is the sulphur regulations are a consistent attempt to implement clean air regulations."

Ken Ogilvie, executive director of Toronto-based Pollution Probe, says his group supports the government's "tougher

standard" on sulphur in gasoline. "They're the equivalent of the tightest standards in the world," says Ogilvie.

But Pollution Probe would prefer a faster pace of cutting down sulphur levels, for the sake of public health. The agency is having ongoing discussions with the oil industry about this issue, says Ogilvie. He is optimistic that Pollution Probe can work with the industry on this issue, although he admits, "We've had some strained issues with the petroleum industry."

On the issue of MMT in gasoline, Ogilvie says, "We're one of the major players in that debate." He explains that the Canadian government banned the import of MMT using trade laws to back it up. Ogilvie thinks the government got embarrassed and backed off because of the confrontation with Ethyl Corp. "We're trading notes with Health Canada trying to get to the bottom of this," he says. Although the long-term effects of MMT pollution are not yet known, Ogilvie asserts, "We believe MMT should come out on precautionary grounds."

News/Comment

Maritime Day a good start



KEITH KNIGHT

MILFORD, N.S. — About 150 men and women, all of them leaders within Maritime Christian Reformed Churches, took part in a host of workshops on November 21 at Milford, N.S., CRC during the first Maritime Day of Encouragement.

Modelled after a similar event held in Ontario every fall, the

Maritime event offered workshops for new elders and deacons as well as those dealing with conflict and managing change within the church. The local organizing committee will meet in January to determine if this is going to become an annual event.

UN committee sends Canadian government tough questions

Alan Doerkson

TORONTO — Although Canada has a strong international reputation for human rights, a United Nations committee and several anti-poverty groups are questioning the validity of this reputation. Anti-poverty groups argue that Canada's federal and provincial governments have created laws and conditions that clearly violate international human rights laws, such as the right to adequate food and housing.

The United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights recently made public a list of 81 tough questions it has sent to Canada's federal and provincial governments to determine if Canada is complying with the UN's International Covenant of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Canada has until next September to answer the questions posed by the committee.

Is homelessness a crisis

The tough questions include:

- Child poverty is at a 17-year high of 20.9 per cent, meaning that nearly 1.5 million children live in poverty in Canada. Although the last recession ended

in 1991, poverty rates have risen steadily since then. Explain how this unacceptable situation has been allowed to occur;

- At what point would the government consider homelessness in Canada to constitute a national emergency?;
- In light of the surplus in the employment insurance (EI) program that is expected to reach \$20 billion by the end of 1998, has the government considered expanding coverage?

The UN committee will review government responses it receives. According to a press release from Low Income Families Together (LIFT), Canada could be found in violation of the International Covenant, raising questions about the commitment of Canada's governments to protecting human rights.

The National Anti-Poverty Organization (NAPO) echoes the UN committee's concerns about Canada's EI fund surplus. "It's money for social insurance. It's not money to pay down the deficit," asserts NAPO spokesperson Jacquie Ackerly.

Jospehine Grey, founder of LIFT, says the EI system discriminates against disadvan-

taged groups, such as the disabled and single parents, by giving training money to people most likely to find a job.

In November, Grey, Ackerly and members of other anti-poverty groups went to Geneva to present evidence to the UN committee about problems related to homelessness and the growing income gap in Canada.

A full list of the UN committee's questions can be found on LIFT's website, at: www.lift.to

Imajenings

Climbing Mount Barney

Every year in June the orange school bus is loaded with sleeping bags and suitcases holding more clothes than they'll need for the three-day Grade 8 class trip. This is their last time together (many have been classmates since kindergarten) before they graduate and head for high school.

When the sign-up sheet asking for chaperones came around one spring, I put my name down. Once off the bus, the camp leaders reigned in the kids and guided them through the schedule of activities and games. During the day, our responsibilities as chaperones were not heavy. If we wanted to join in the activities we could, but, dignity in tact, it was okay if we bowed out.

Most kids that age have unstoppable energy. At the brink of adulthood, they flex the strings that hold their innocence, trying to secure their footing to balance their new size, testing their ideas and attitudes in bursts of emotion that hardly even subside for the two or three hours during which they (finally!) sleep.

Innocence robbed

In our times now, our children can grow towards adulthood with so much, and without worry about what they will eat or wear. They are mostly secure. In the Netherlands during World War II, my parents were of the age these kids are now.

A different time. A different setting. A time when the word "camp" had a whole other meaning. A time when innocence was not something children had the luxury of choosing to give up. Innocence was robbed, often well before age 13. They lived hunger and tragedy, trials and loss that the majority of North American children in the last 50 years have never experienced. Those who live through wars and strife are tested and tried in ways that our children are not. Maybe, not to the same degree and not with the same life or death odds, but might our children be tested and tried in other, more subtle ways today?

Some time ago, a group of young guys blocked the door of the grocery store. "What a shiftless bunch of do-nothings!" sputtered the man at the counter beside me. "What those kids need is a war! That will teach them!" I didn't like what he said.

A few weeks ago at the cenotaph an old

veteran told the crowd there that he would never wish war on anyone. No one, even worst enemies, deserved war, he said. You could see he meant it.

Mount Barney. At the Grade 8 camp there is an empty old barn. One side is now a rock climbing wall. In harnesses and helmets, each of the kids was outfitted to at least try this "Mount Barney." The sharp, rough hand-holds. The slippery foot-holds, too far apart. Knuckles and knees were scraped raw. Legs cramped. Elbows jabbed. Lungs forgetting to work and teeth gritting.

Heart-wrenching looks

The incline was almost straight up. Progress was slow. From the ground the camp leaders led the others in hurling up loud encouragement and prompting, advice and cheers. Some didn't make it. After 20 minutes of trying, they were lowered. Each was cheered for trying, patted and reassured, "Next time...."

Some walked away to be alone with their defeat, wiping their tears. That look wrenches my heart. It's the look of someone who still can't tie his or her own shoe. The look of someone who is never first. Or popular enough. Who never throws the ball right. And feels it.

Some did make it. From up high they waved, their faces glowing, victorious. They squealed in glee. They balanced a few minutes before they were lowered back down.

Their look was contagious. It is the look that comes with a fist clutching the money from the tooth fairy or a brand new driver's license. The look that comes with knowing the memory work, finally! The look that comes with hearing, "Well done!" And believing it.

Like a refiner's fire, war tests. Maybe that's what the man at the grocery store meant. The cost of war is too great. Maybe that's what the veteran meant.

This world is sometimes a war zone for our children. They are continually being tested in many ways. Most of the tests are not staked in physical life or death — eternal issues are often what is being tested. Take a moment to cheer for someone who is climbing their own Mount Barney right now!

Jen Vander Beek is a freelance writer who lives in Forest, Ont.

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Editorial

Letters from senior to a junior editor (4)

My Dear Wordgood:

Your response to my last letter about our sex-soaked society made some excellent points, I thought. You quoted from an NIV note on 1 Thessalonians 4:3: "In the first century, moral standards were generally very low, and chastity was regarded as an unreasonable restriction." Hence you thought that my letter was a bit alarmist. Wow. And here I was thinking that our society is sinking to new lows. There's nothing new under the sun. There are not even new lows!

Reading Scripture and reading notes on Scripture can be a very enlightening experience. I woke up last night and tossed and turned a bit, which on account of a new mattress we bought earlier this year doesn't disturb my wife too much, because, as the salesperson so eloquently explained, "It comes with individually wrapped pocket coils bound at the centre instead of at the end so that you use only the ones you rest on." Ah, blessed assurance. Nevertheless, in spite of the new-found freedom I have to bounce around on my own side of the bed, I decided to get up and read some Scripture. I have discovered that times of sleeplessness can be a unique opportunity for listening to God.

My thoughts were partly on a person I know who is suffering for righteousness' sake at the moment. She didn't get an assignment that was very important to her because she didn't agree with the twisted

ethics of the person in charge.

I started paging through the gospel of John, and began reading in Chapter 6 where Jesus talks about being the Bread of Life. In fact, he says that this bread is his flesh. "Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life," said Jesus.

Too hard to accept

That kind of talk went over like a lead balloon with many in his Jewish audience. They took it literally, and were naturally repulsed by the idea of eating someone's flesh and drinking someone's blood. They knew from the Torah that you are not supposed to eat human flesh or drink any blood. So quite a few of Jesus' disciples muttered that this teaching was a hard teaching and that they could not accept it. It was not hard in the sense of being difficult to understand. It was hard to accept.

Apparently, Jesus' brothers also found this teaching too hard to accept. "For even his brothers did not believe in him," we read. These brothers wanted Jesus to go public with his miracles. Maybe if Jesus put on a good show they could also believe in him. Their acceptance of Jesus was influenced by their society's acceptance of him.

Are we hated enough?

At this point Jesus makes a very profound observation. "The right time for me has not yet come; for you any time is right." Why is any time right for Jesus' brothers? I asked myself. The answer follows: "The world cannot hate you, but it hates me because I testify that what it does is evil."

Think about that for a moment. If the world hates us, we have to become very circumspect. We have to pick our times just right. Because if we don't, wicked people will pounce on us. But if we give no cause to the world to hate us, if we don't ever tell them that what they do is evil, we are free to come and go as we please. Any time is right for us. The world is our oyster.

You know, Dearest Wordgood, Jesus' words apply all too well to my generation.

The world won't hate us very much ... unless you are a pro-life person who reminds the world that taking the lives of the unborn is criminal, a kind of holocaust. I can already hear the protests of many well-adjusted Christians. Don't call it a "holocaust." That trivializes what happened to the Jews in the Second World War. (Does it? You don't think that six million fetuses can compare with six million Jews?) There are times that I, too, think pro-life people go too far with their interventionist methods. Some of them go to jail for their pesky behavior. But who is really on trial here?

The world won't hate us very much ... unless you are a person who protests the collective greed of corporations and the growing gap between the rich and the poor. I can already hear the protests of those who believe in the trickle-down theory of

economics, who fear any action that might threaten the gross national product and who think that mergers and international agreements are the way to go even if we lose our national freedom and cultural identity. I have felt the same fears. There are times that I think that people with a sharp social conscience are naive, and dangerous to the economic welfare of the nation.

The world won't hate us very much ... unless you freely proclaim that Jesus Christ is Lord.

Someone sent around a list of hymn titles that we might be singing if we were a little more honest about our tepid faith. The list includes the following titles: "I Surrender Some," "There Shall Be Sprinkles of Blessings," "Blest Be the Tie That Doesn't Cramp My Style," "I'm Fairly Certain That My Redeemer Lives," "I Love to Talk About Telling the Story" and "Go Tell It on the Speed Bump."

I reluctantly add the following revised hymn line: "Must I be carried to the skies on mattresses with individually wrapped pocket coils of ease?"



et coils of ease?"

Onward, Christian reserves

"For you, any time is right," said Jesus. Your idea of Christian schooling has more to do with "quality education" than with obedient education. You accept mass-produced merchandise and big stores that squeeze out the smaller competition with the same enthusiasm as the rest of the consumers in our society. You block out the still, small voice of great books, fine music and nature just as effectively as all others who allow themselves to be absorbed by vapid television shows, boisterous parties and gaudy productions like *The Phantom of the Opera*, *River Dance* and *Titanic*.

The world hates people who testify that what it does is evil. These people take their orders from above. Their bread is to do the will of the Father. Their bread is Jesus, who came down from heaven. He is the kind of manna that fully satisfies. When you eat that manna you lose your fear of what the world thinks of you. You become a misfit.

Coming back to the person who lost an important assignment, she was told that her taking the "high moral road" was probably a result of her Dutch Calvinistic background. It was meant as a slur. But I look upon it as a badge of honor. If that's what it means to be a Dutch Calvinist, let everyone be a Dutch Calvinist. But I consider the term to have a wider application. I think a good Mennonite, a true Anglican and a genuine Baptist wear the same badge. It's because of what happens when we partake of the Lord's Supper or the Eucharist. If it's true that we are what we eat, then eating the flesh and drinking the blood of Jesus makes us stand out in a wicked and perverse generation.

Somehow I think that your generation will understand this better than mine, Wordgood. I am counting on it.

Affectionately yours, Truetype

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- ◆ express opinions infused by Scripture and rooted in a Reformed perspective;
- ◆ provide contact for the Christian community.

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Letters

Losing a daughter through false memories hurts deeply

A big thank you to Bill Van Dyk for his letter to Harry Van Belle.

We also have some remarks to make and some questions to ask. Dr. Van Belle, would you write the same facts about false memories if your daughter had accused you and your wife of sexual abuse that never happened?

Would you still write the same facts if you had not seen your daughter or

granddaughters for eight years and your grandsons not at all? Which means never a complete birthday party or Christmas family gathering?

Would you still believe the facts stated in your last lines of your second article if you had gone through a lie detector for your daughter? As a therapeutic technique you forgot to mention the book *Courage to Heal*, which is called "the

Bible of the incest survivors," written by two radical feminists. It was recommended by our Christian Reformed Church pastors and has done a tremendous amount of damage to the so-called incest survivors. Unfortunately we all know that there's a lot of sexual abuse, and to our shame also in our Christian Reformed Churches.

Please, Dr. Van Belle, take a serious look at the other side of the recovered memory issue and you will discover how much pain and hurt this therapy, now abandoned by psychiatry, has caused.

By the grace of God we have survived,

with the support of our pastor, our congregation, our other children and grandchildren, relatives and friends. I am writing this in our own home and not in a mental hospital.

By the grace of God we still love our daughter because we know it was the therapy that caused it.

Dr. Van Belle, you cannot imagine the pain and hurt if you have not personally experienced false accusations of this kind.

Hurting but surviving parents
Belleville, Ont.

Article had 'inkonsistenses'

Ze artikl entitld "EU countries settle on Euro-English" ofers gret help for al of us who are lexikografikcally chalengd.

Alas, ze artikl had som inkonsistenses. "Also, al wil agre that the horible mes of the silent e' in the languag is disgrasful [sik] and should be don away with." Obviusly, ze "e" in disgrasful vas an eror. I vas puzld by the vord "wit" in "By the fourth yer peopl wil be reseptiv to steps such as replasing "th" wit....." Should it not be "viz"?

I am resonably sertan zat ze "ti" will bekom "sh," which mens zat "kombinations" will bekom "kombinashions." I also zink zat zer vil be no mor ned for apostrofis ezer. After al, ze French dont ned zem. And I expect to se ze "gh" eliminated as was ze silent "e." And also ze silent "l."

I zink zat to praktis we kud start viz tong twisters: I ofer a modest exempl:

Sister Suzy sifts zisls: she is a zisl sifter.

Or...

How much vod, cud a vod chuk chuk if a vod chuk cud chuk vod? He wud chuk as much vod as a vod chuk cud chuk if a vod chuck cud chuck vod.

Or...

Bety Boter bot som butr, but she sed zis butrs bitr. If I put it in my batr, it wil mak my batr bitr, so she bot som betr butr, betr zan ze bitr butr, and she put it in her batr and it mad her batr betr.

Not only wil zis improv speling and typing skils, but it can prov to be an exeslent way of improving dikshon.

Im shur ozer changs wil kom az ze new system bekoms mor komonplas.

Iv ben zinking of ways to inkorporat it into katekism as vel. Zat shud mak it ezir for al katekumens to lern betr and mor efishtly.

Zink ov al ze posiblitez! Zis is a profredrs nitmar!

Loyd Burghart (I dont lik it already!)
Rimbey, Alta.

EP's report South African church incorrect

The Evangelical Press report on the synod of the Dutch Reformed Church (CC Nov. 6, p. 8) contained at least one outright mistake and a significantly imprecise statement.

The mistake is about the status of the *Belhar Confession*. The report says the Uniting Reformed Church would consider a merger only if the Dutch Reformed Church adopts the *Belhar Confession*. That is false. The URCSA demands that in a newly established united church, the *Belhar* be included as a basis document. It does not require that the DRC accept the confession as its own internal document.

This became clear during the debate in the synod. The URCSA is saying that when it enters a new church union, it will take the *Belhar* along with it. The DRC, in fact, agreed to consider this possibility, and authorized its representatives to discuss this in the continuing negotiations.

The introduction to that topic, ("The church still stopped short of endorsing racial equality as an official church doctrine"), is not supported by any reference to resolutions of the recent synod. I

do not know what it means, unless it is an interpretation of why the DRC would not adopt the *Belhar Confession*. If that is the case, it is a very broad and inaccurate generalization.

The imprecise statement is about calling apartheid 'sinful.' For several years the DRC has been calling apartheid sinful. The key phrase here is that this synod declared it sinful "not simply in its effects and operations but also in its fundamental nature." Previously, as I am sure you are aware, the Afrikaners always wanted to preserve the vision of some good intentions in the hearts of the early leaders and their own ancestors. Now, however, they are willing to admit that in its core apartheid was sinful.

While not quite going the full distance of making this statement a confessional statement, this statement did provide sufficient evidence to the World Alliance of Reformed Churches so that the WARC could lift the suspension.

Richard van Houten
Secretary General
Reformed Ecumenical Council (REC)
Grand Rapids, Mich.

Widen responsibility for funding

Don't look a gift horse in the mouth! According to a front-page story in the October 9 *Christian Courier*, Revenue Canada has done exactly that and found our definition of a gift wanting.

The courts in both the Zandstra and McBurney cases made it abundantly clear that fees are not "gifts" if the giver receives anything in return. I hear echos of Jesus' saying: "Do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing." I do not believe that Christians mainly give donations to gain a material advantage.

I agree with Vriend that "Christians ought not to be devious" because that dishonors the name of Christ.

The alarm bells should have been sounded when the Christian community failed to adequately support Christian education and dumped that responsibility on the parents, who in desperation went along with any scheme that promised relief. But relief in Ontario should be demanded from the Ontario government,

which, in an advertising campaign, claims that the recent changes in education benefit "all Ontario Children" — all, that is, unless you choose Jewish, Christian or Moslem education for your children.

Clearly, the Christian community has its work cut out. For it to proclaim that "all of life is religion" is more than a convenient slogan. It needs to be put into practise also in education. In that context I found it disappointing that Redeemer College accepted the right to grant BA degrees but did not fight to assert its right to receive funding like any other public institution.

While this battle for funding of Christian education continues, let us hope that the Christian community will generously support Christian schools so that parents have only to pay a reasonable tuition fee and don't have to rely on questionable schemes to maximize donations.

Eugene Kruysse
Mississauga, Ont.

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Opinion

Keep the 'R' in praise

William L. Vander Beek

By now the majority of Christian Reformed churches in Canada have incorporated a "praise session" into their worship services. Led by a praise team, accompanied by a variety of instruments, the congregation sings contemporary songs from an overhead screen. Usually the people stand while they sing. Hands, freed from holding a rather heavy book, are free to be raised in adoration and praise as believers "lift up" his great Name.

By and large I don't mind this development, even though I miss some rich older songs from the *Psalter Hymnal* and would like us to keep on singing those as well. But we do well to recognize, behind this newer style, a trend of thinking which needs more reflection than we usually give it.

A celebrative service

What word do churches which have made up vision statements often use to describe the kind of worship they desire? It has to be "celebrative." That seems to be the most prominent desire for worship. That description calls for "praise." This trend fits in very well with the modern tendency to always be "upbeat," "positive" in mood and in public expression. To accomplish that, you must never dwell on anything that is "negative."

One of my concerns is that with this emphasis other biblical aspects of the truth are deliberately kept hidden.

I agree that all our singing should lead to extolling God's goodness and wonderful power; no song may remain in a minor key. But do we not also agree that our songs should cover a wider range than just "praise"?

Let's connect this issue to prayer. We have in recent years been taught that prayers consisting only of petitions ("gimme prayers") fall short of the full range which our prayers should cover. We have learned to test our prayers against the acronym ACTS.

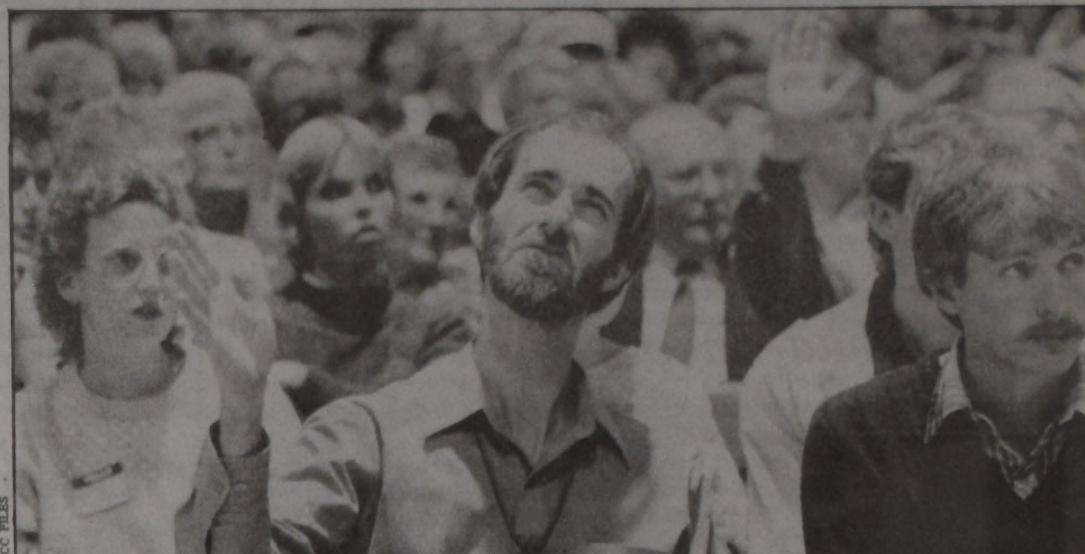
Comprehensive prayers

Prayer — it should contain the element of Adoration, Thanksgiving, and Supplication. But that still leaves out the "C."

The "C" stands for "Confession." We must humbly come to God, aware of our shortcomings. Therefore, one regular element of our prayers must be confession of sin and pleas for forgiveness. That correction was and is welcome.

But should that not also apply to our songs? Calvin labelled hymns as "sung prayers." So if by "praise," and by "celebrative" we mean that our songs should consist only of adoration, then that part of our worship misses the biblical

CC FILES



Why do we have a praise session? What is the purpose?

fulness as well. Our traditional order of worship included the "service of reconciliation," in which the awareness of our sinfulness and the need for forgiveness was clearly expressed. Either the Ten Commandments or a New Testament exhortation was read after an "assurance of pardon."

But many churches leave that element totally out of the praise session.

But why? Won't adoration sound more joyful, more praise-full after an "assurance of pardon"?

Especially early in the service, the question needs to be expressed: do we have access to the presence of the Lord, and on what grounds? It is important that we express that in and of ourselves we have sinned and need to be assured that only on the basis of Christ's sacrifice for us the Lord will not judge us, but accept us warmly into his presence.

What about sin?

As a young student who had a strong liking for French, I would often attend the French Protestant church (Eglise Wallonne) in our city. Every Sunday morning they would sing (in French), "O Lord, your law is holy, and your commandments holy, righteous and pure." That is Romans 7:12. And then, with a deeply moving

tune, Psalm 130:3 was knit onto that text from Romans, as we sang: "But if you should count our iniquities, O Lord, who could stand?" Two simple short verses from the Bible. A short song like that goes a long way. A number of our churches here use the song based on Psalm 51, "Create in me a clean heart." Some very fine songs are available for this purpose.

Enthroned on praise

Some time ago I was reading about the function of praise in a pentecostal and dispensational view of worship. The context was praise as an instrument to bring Jews to conversion, so that Christ can return.

Psalm 22:3 in the King James Version was a key text: "You are the Holy One, enthroned on the praises of Israel." If you read Israel here to mean Jews, you can see that an important part of the mission to Jews is to incite them to praise the Lord. That's how a throne for him is set up, that he can sit on. From there it is only one step to the idea that we, believing humans, Jews and Gentiles, by our praise, lift and hold him up on his glorious throne.

Yes, they say, praise is very powerful. For it is by praise that "God would actually come down and dwell among his people when they praise and worship him." "Praise is something that brings about God's presence." "Wherever we went (on a praise procession to Israel) ... and praised God, it allowed God to manifest his presence in a way that he had not been able to do without the praise." (These quotes are from a thesis for a Master of Divinity degree, presented at Regent College, Vancouver).

This is the language of those who see all of salvation as a form of co-operation between God and

the believers — the old heresy of synergism.

So why do we have praise sessions? What is the purpose? To bring God's presence down among us? Is its purpose to create a throne for him to sit on? To push God into manifesting himself in a certain way? Can we manipulate his Spirit, then? Can we create the circumstances which "allow God to move"?

Or are we simply inciting ourselves? Our emotions often need to be stimulated. Are we simply applying his word: "Come near to God, and he will come near to you" (James 4:8). That kind of reciprocal communion is good.

Christ among us

The pentecostalist view I just described is similar to what the Baal priests believed on Mount Carmel, when they tried to coerce their pagan gods into doing something for them. Can we not rely on Jesus' own assurance that where a number of disciples are together in his Name, "there I am in their midst" (Matt. 18:20)?

Yes, we can. His Spirit dwells in his people: He is in our midst.

Singing is a wonderful means to help us enter into a proper framework for communion with God. The emotional benefits in terms of worship are great.

So, what is the aim of our praise-session? That question needs to be discussed.

By all means let's praise him for his wonderful being and his wonderful deeds!

But let's keep the "R" of repentance in our praise!

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William L. Vander Beek is a retired Christian Reformed pastor who lives in Langley, B.C.

Arts/Media

Film Review

An enigmatic story of obsessive love

Marian Van Til

Beloved

Stars Oprah Winfrey, Danny Glover, Kimberly Elise, Thandie Newton. Based on the novel by Toni Morrison. Produced by Oprah Winfrey. Directed by Jonathan Demme.

This story, based on Toni Morrison's Pulitzer Prize-winning 1987 novel, is set in Cincinnati, Ohio, about 25 years after the Civil War. Though Cincinnati is a city with a southern flavor, lying as it does on the Ohio River border between Ohio and Kentucky, life is better there, apparently than in Kentucky. Though blacks now have their freedom, racism is alive and well in the human heart, as it always had been, and still is.

The main female character, Sethe, played by Oprah Winfrey, is a former slave who has had to endure unspeakable abuse, including sexual abuse, from a group of former white slavers. She loses her husband, and to protect her children — the only things in the world that now matter to her — she herself resorts to an unspeakable act.

Beloved unwinds slowly and abstractly; only very gradually are we able to piece together

who these characters are and what their actions mean. And even when it's all over, we're left still wondering about many things.

Horror film or serious drama?

Sethe is obsessed with her dead daughter, who is haunting the house where the woman lives with another, young adult daughter named Denver. Then the daughter we assumed was dead appears bodily, seemingly having been traumatized to the point of speechlessness.

We're leery of this newcomer, and afraid she'll have some horrible, even demonic effect on Sethe, Denver, and Sethe's lover — an old friend who arrives in the area (Danny Glover). Is the "dead" daughter really dead or not? Is she dead, but a figment of Sethe's distraught and guilt-ridden imagination? Is she a kind of demon who should be exorcised by the local women of

the church? Or is she a metaphor for black women's suffering, even into the present? And what is the role of faith here? (Though seemingly peripheral, it seems to "cure" Sethe, bringing her peace.)

The relationships between all four of the major characters are complex and puzzling. Part of the film's unsettling nature is due to the fact that we can't decide whether this film wants to be a gothic pseudo-horror flick or a serious social/psychological drama.

Every twitch magnified

Oprah Winfrey's first purpose (*List*). With its virtually all black cast and disturbing story, it's not likely that *Beloved* will appeal to mainstream (white) audiences. That's too bad: its graphic depiction of deep, denigrating racist attitudes and behavior should jolt those of us in the white majority into re-examining our own attitudes — time should jolt those of us in the white majority into re-examining our own attitudes — time certainly hasn't healed all racial wounds, despite slavery long being a thing of the past.

Yet the story is so enigmatic and unsettling, and pulls so few punches, that if Winfrey was

aiming at getting large numbers of white viewers to watch her film, she is undoubtedly failing.

One suspects, though, that she is first of all addressing a black audience, in a kind of act of self-healing. And then, if the rest of us want to look in, and learn, so much the better.

The camera work in *Beloved* serves to amplify the intimate nature of the story: director Jonathan Demme uses frequent,

intense close-ups of the main characters, every twitch, blink, skin pore, blemish and sweat bead magnified over and over. That technique may very well add to the discomfit of some viewers. While the acting is generally excellent, the film is simply too long (almost three hours), and finally and ironically, may numb its audience into apathy.

Christian radio news from round the world

CBN radio program reaches eight countries

VIRGINIA BEACH, Va. (EP) — A Christian broadcast is reaching 60 million people in eight countries. "Turning Point," a weekly half-hour magazine program produced by the Christian Broadcasting Network, is seen in Cameroon, England, Grenada, Kenya, Nigeria, Trinidad, Uganda and Zambia. The evangelistic program includes music, sports, celebrity interviews and testimonies.

"To be able to touch so many lives in so many countries is a powerful outreach," says co-host and producer Victor Oladokun.

Russian Christian broadcasting conference is a first

MOSCOW, Russia (EP) — An historic first-ever Russian Christian Broadcasting Conference was held October 5-10 in Moscow, and attended by more than 400 delegates from all over the former Soviet Union.

Phil Cooke, producer and director with the California-based Phil Cooke Pictures said, "In spite of the severe economic conditions prevalent in Russia, Christian leaders are experiencing a remarkable interest in using media as an effective tool to reach the nation with the gospel."

Cooke told British journalist Dan Wooding, "We now have the platform and the access, and the window is open. Let's join them in partnership to help produce the kind of programming that will make an impact on that struggling country."

Christian radio in Romania blocked by Orthodox Church

BUCHAREST, Romania (EP) — Six Christian radio stations operated in Romania by the evangelical "Voice of the Gospel" will not have their licenses renewed, according to the Romanian government. The decision reportedly comes at the request of the Romanian Orthodox Church, which dominates religious broadcasting in Romania and objects to any competition from the evangelical minority.

South African broadcast law better than feared

CAPETOWN, S. Africa (EP) — South Africa's parliament has passed the long awaited Broadcasting Act, which Christian broadcasters feared would mean new restrictions on their ministries. The law lays out regulations for "community" radio stations, but does not appear to outlaw Christian broadcasting.



Kimberly Elise (left), Oprah Winfrey and Thandie Newton.

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Church

As never before, the world is hungry for God

WASHINGTON, D.C. (religioustoday.com) — The current hunger for spirituality is not just a North American phenomenon. A search to find God is taking place worldwide in a variety of ways, and may be unprecedented in its scope and intensity, those who study religious trends say.

"I believe the greatest spiritual awakening of all time is taking place today," Bill Bright, founder of Campus Crusade for Christ, told the *Washington Times*. "More people are hearing the gospel. More people are responding to the gospel."

Moral decay, financial disasters, and the emptiness of materialistic cultures are causing people to turn to religion for answers, says Martin Marty, Lutheran theologian at the University of Chicago and director of the Public Religion Project. Many more people are reading religious texts such as the Bible and the Koran, studying at seminaries, meeting in prayer groups and attending healing services.



Bill Bright

Two-thirds of Americans say that religion could "solve all or most of our problems," a Gallup poll found this year. In the U.S., social resources are increasingly being directed to churches because they have proven to be effective in treating problems such as drug and alcohol addictions.

The 21st century is likely to bring a new era of religion,

observers of trends say. Many people have turned to traditional faiths, including Christianity, Islam, Judaism and Hinduism. Islam has 1.1 billion followers worldwide and is growing fast. One of every seven people in the world was a Muslim in 1950; today the number is one of five.

Counters predictions

The number of evangelical Christians has grown 126 per cent since 1970, while the world's population has increased 60 per cent since then. Christianity, which has 1.9 billion adherents, has become a major religion in non-Western areas. Pentecostal churches have 410 million members and are said to be growing by 20 million a year, particularly in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

Religions find themselves "elbow to elbow, cheek by jowl" as they have spread around the world, Harvey Cox, a professor at Harvard Divinity School, told the *Christian Science Monitor*. This creates both tensions and the opportunity for dialogue,

he said.

Others, disillusioned by conventional religion or suspicious of institutional authority, have ventured outside of traditional dogmas and creeds, into areas such as the New Age movement. Typical of our era, too, is people designing their own faith, selecting beliefs and practices from various religious traditions.

Young people increasingly find their religious communities in cyberspace. The Internet carries approximately 140 million pages related to religion. By the year 2010, 10 to 20 per cent of the American population will rely exclusively or primarily on the Internet for religious purposes and will never attend a church again, asserts David Kinaman, research director of the Barna Research Group.

One in six teenagers says he or she expects to use the Internet as a substitute for attending church within the next five years, Barna found. "You may tell your grandchildren that back in the old days, when people

wanted a religious experience they attended a church for that purpose. Chances are good that your grandchildren will be shocked by such a revelation."

"Spirituality" is the fastest-growing area in book publishing, as stores fill with books focussing on spiritual things. Large groups are meeting for spiritual challenges, such as Promise Keepers and similar groups for women. Many people who seek counselling want faith incorporated into the process.

The rise of religion contradicts predictions of just 30 years ago. Some theologians said God was "dead." Many observers tended to be condescending toward religion, which was considered declining in relevance; they saw science, reason and technology as holding the keys to the future.

There are "many wonderful demonstrations that God is truly working in our time in a way that's truly unprecedented in all of history," Bright said.

Christians around the world join November prayer day for persecuted church

ROME, Italy (EP) — Christians in 130 countries joined in prayer for the persecuted church Nov. 15. The International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church world service was held in Rome. Dr. Gayano Sottile, president of the Italian Evangelical Alliance said, "It is time to pray from the city of the Apostle Paul, whose prayers broke human chains and gave freedom to share the gospel of Jesus Christ."

During that service, Rev. Johan Candelin, executive director of the World Evangelical Fellowship's religious liberty commission, stated "This is a time for the non-persecuted church to think about how we use our freedom, and for the persecuted church to ask

whether anyone cares for them. It is also a time to understand that the world-wide family of God is a core issue for Christians who are not ashamed of the gospel."

Another world service was held in Barcelona, Spain. Pastor Hos Maria Martinez explained why it was appropriate to celebrate in Barcelona: "In 1958, closure of the church by General Franco's security forces prompted World Evangelical Fellowship to organize a world day of prayer specifically for this church, and some weeks later permission was granted to reopen the church. This year the crowded church had the privilege of praying for other churches under pressure."

Candles, marches and radio

Other activities on the International Day of Prayer:

* Churches united in prayer across Cambodia for religious freedom for Cambodians and for those outside their country who are experiencing lack of religious freedom.

* On Sergel Square in Stockholm, Sweden, a sea of candles

was lit to honor all who have died for their faith, and to remind passers-by that millions of people are still suffering for the same reason today. The candle-lighting ceremony was conducted prior to an evening concert of prayer service.

* One church in England led a march through the village, gathering people for a service of prayer.

* Five million African listeners of "Radio Habari" participated in the International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church through radio broadcasts in the Swahili language.

Terry Madison, president and CEO of Open Doors with Brother Andrew, urged Christians in the United States and Canada to "keep on praying daily for our suffering brothers and sisters around the world that are persecuted for their faith."

Madison, who has traveled widely around the world to meet with and report on the Christians in the suffering church, said that an estimated 100,000 North American churches had participated in the International Day of Prayer this year, and urged continued prayer.

New book by Dutch theologian seems to deny Christ's divinity; stirs controversy



Dutch theologian H.M. Kuitert early in his career.

CC Staff, with files from REC

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. — Retired Dutch theologian H.M. Kuitert has been no stranger to controversy in his long career. So it's no surprise that his latest book is stirring volatile reaction. *Jesus, the Inheritance of Christendom* discusses the dual nature of Christ, his humanity and divinity.

Contradicting the traditional Christian view distilled from historic reading of Scripture, Kuitert maintains that the fact

that Jesus followed the Jewish account of God means that he never saw himself as God-on-earth. He is not the second God, nor is he the second person of a holy trinity who took flesh from the maiden Mary.

Kuitert's book provoked quick reaction from the Reformed Confessional Council, an organization within the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland — GKN). The council charged Kuitert with turning against nearly all that the Christian church has confessed about Christ. The council wants the GKN synod to declare the book unacceptable.

GKN synod chairperson J.W. Doff, however, says he regrets that the Confessional Reformed Council immediately went public with its complaints. Doff says he himself is still reading and thinking about the book, so he has no comments. But nor will he call the book an interesting contribution to theological discussion.

That would be too easy, Doff says.

For our
Calendar of
Events,
please turn to
page 19

Church

Restless realism

"Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom."
(James 4:9)

It was a funeral I didn't expect with a family I didn't know, the aftermath of a tragedy I couldn't comprehend. Two men drinking at a party, the younger man dating the older man's daughter. A friendly scuffle? Or was it pent-up resentment that never before spied from the shadows? A gun. A mock "shooting match." Scared friends and family. Another shot in the barn out back. A smoking weapon in the older man's hand; the younger man dead on the ground.

Woeful weavings

Someone in our congregation took his friend from work to our worship services. For three months he and his common-law wife and children came on Sunday morning. He told me that he needed God. He told me that he found God at our church. He told me that his life was changing.

Now he sat steaming in my office. It was his brother who was murdered last night, and he wanted to kill the murderer! First things first, however. I was the only "priest" he knew. Could I officiate at the funeral?

The spattered blood of death became the spattered ink of chatter in our community, gossiped out of every media newsstand. The shooter was a white male, part of a prominent "old" family in our area, a black sheep lingering at the scandalous end of former glory. The dead man swaggered in on another, newer ethnic wave. Hidden behind his charismatic charm was a long record of drugs, theft, drunkenness and sexual promiscuity.

Mixed mourning

Of course, the plot thickened. The man with the gun turned out to be the brother-in-law of one of my best friends, a member of our congregation and someone I had met with monthly in an accountability group. Their stories differed from that of the young brother who asked me to speak at the funeral.

My friend and his family emptied their life savings into a fund to buy the best legal counsel for their obviously innocent relative. The

Chapter & Verse



• Wayne Brouwer
Andrew Kuyvenhoven
Laura Smit
Al Wolters

angry brother, new Christian and newcomer to our worship services, didn't know the unspoken protocol of "assigned seating" in our worship space, and sat right in front of the woman whose brother shot his brother. Now the newcomer worshipped with great urgency of heart, while the couple behind him and his common-law family fumed worshiplessly.

The funeral was horribly difficult. I knew too much and not enough. Where is God in all of this?

Cleansing compassion

When we gathered around the casket in the cemetery I spoke a few words of committal, offered prayer, and then encouraged the brother to speak. He wept. He moved from shoulder to shoulder, shuddering grief on every neck. As the casket was lowered into the earth he jumped down on it and blanketed it spread-eagle with his body. He wailed a litany of loss and sorrow and vengeance that pummelled away any other sound. The world grew chill and still.

Weep, children, for the loss of innocence in this world.

Weep, brothers, for the cruelty of life.

Weep, mothers, for the children who die before their times.

Weep, fathers, for the pain that shatters polite society.

Weep, sisters, for the complex soap opera sponsored by life itself.

Weep, people of God, for a world gone mad, for a creation sucked into its own black hole, for the night of evil and the day of gray.

Weep for the reign of Death that lingers too long. Weep until the whisper of Easter shatters these heavy chains and restless souls begin again to hum the doxology.

"Jesus wept." (John 11:35)

Wayne Brouwer is senior pastor at Harderwyk Christian Reformed Church in Holland, Mich.

Florida faith groups work towards spiritual awakening

MIAMI, Fla. (religiontoday.com) — An interfaith campaign is promoting spiritual renewal in Florida. "Awakening 2000" is a project organized by former state official Jim Towey, a Catholic who is recruiting Floridians to sign pledge cards reminding them to pray and reach out to needy people. The project will sponsor a "Summit of Faith" next fall and dedicate

itself to helping Florida's neglected, especially those who are dying.

Political leaders are participating in the project. They include Gov. Lawton Chiles, a Democrat and Presbyterian who will be governor until Gov.-elect Jeb Bush, a Republican and Catholic, takes over Jan. 5. Bush also is participating, as are Florida Chief Justice Major

Harding, legislative leaders, Cabinet leaders, a federal judge, and Christian and Jewish leaders.

Towey says Mother Teresa, whom he met in 1985, is the inspiration for the project. He admires the way she respected and cared for people of all religions, including Hindus, Muslims and Jews.

Indonesian mosques burned to 'settle old scores'

Alex Buchan

LONDON (Compass) — The worst fears of Indonesia's Christian leaders were realized on November 30 as "Christian" mobs set fire to several mosques and burned a Muslim school in Kupang, West Timor. The attacks are apparently in retaliation for Muslim mobs burning seven churches and ransacking 16 more in Jakarta on Sunday, Nov. 22. Mobs continued to roam the streets of Kupang last week as Indonesia's ethnic and religious tensions increase.

A Kupang Protestant pastor shared his fears on condition his name was not used: "Indonesia is very close to a blood bath and civil war, with extremists from the so-called Christian community and Muslim communities often more anxious to settle old scores than keep the peace. But we have so many areas where Christians are a vulnerable minority, and also areas, like here, where Muslims are a vulnerable minority, that if there is no religious toleration established, there will literally be thousands of deaths as minority communities are wiped off the map in frenzy of hate."

Many nominal Christians

Kupang's population of 120,000 is predominately Christian, as is the island of West Timor. Christians were holding a non-violent day of mourning

over the Jakarta church burnings when rival gangs began fighting and violence ensued. As a local pastor clarified, "The word 'Christian' in Indonesia often merely means 'non-Muslim,' and may have little to do with the church-going habits or spiritual orientation of the individual."

Christian leaders hastened to issue calls for calm. The Roman Catholic Bishop of Kupang, Petrus Turang, apologized over the radio for the mosque burnings. Islamic leaders have also told extremists to cool down. Abdurrahman Wahid, head of Indonesia's largest Muslim organization, the 35-million-member Nahdlatul Ulama, blamed the recent riots on "provocateurs" who want to create strife in order to prevent the country from achieving secular democracy. He said, "I hope Muslims ... are not deceived by such provocations."

Realizing the gravity of the situation, the evangelical National Prayer Network (NPN) called today on all Christians to devote the whole month of December to prayer and fasting "for the restoration of security and peace by God to overcome the mindless violence, riots, criminal actions, murders, rapes, etc., which have rocked the country during the last six months."

140 priests devote days off to telephone advice line

PHILADELPHIA, Pa. (religiontoday.com) — Hundreds of people are calling a confidential advice line run by the Catholic Archdiocese of Philadelphia. The toll-free line is intended to bring both former and prospective Catholics into the faith. It was begun recently after a \$225,000 ad campaign on television and radio.

Three phone lines have taken prayer requests and questions about divorce, abortion and

suicide from people of various faiths, the Associated Press says. About 140 priests from the area have volunteered to work on their days off to answer the estimated 100 calls a day. The phones are staffed Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., and answering machines take messages on nights and weekends. The number, which can be reached only from the Philadelphia calling area, is 1-877-BLESS-ME.

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Rem Kooistra

I have celebrated Christmas more than 80 times by now. I do not pretend that I remember each one of these feasts separately. Slowly they have melted into one.

As children we always looked forward to the annual Christmas

Home again, we ate supper, while new chunks of coal were put on the fire. It was all together too good to go to bed.

celebration, even though much of the feast was predictable. In our home there was no Christmas tree to be found. My parents told us that such a tree was a pagan custom and that it was good enough for us to worship God "in spirit and truth." That was also why we did not get presents on Christmas morning. Of course, in the Dutch custom, we had already received our presents from St. Nicholas on December the 5th.

In essence, we had two Christmas days (but no boxing day, as in Canada and England). If December 24 or December 27 happened to be on a Sunday, we could end up going to church five times within three days. Since we were a very small church, most of these services were "reading services," carried on without benefit of clergy.

The preaching menu was rather predictable. On the morning of the first Christmas day, we went with Joseph and Mary from Nazareth to Bethlehem (Luke 2:1-7). In the evening we listened with the shepherds to "the good news of great joy" (Luke 2:8-15). In the morning of the second Christmas day, we often tried to understand the song of the angels (Luke 2:14).

The first Christmas service on the first Christmas day was very

Christmas 80 years ago

special: it was usually the best attended service of the year. After the final Amen, the whole congregation would rise to sing with deep devotion their: "Ere zij God" — "Glory to God (and on earth, peace.)"

Now that I write this down, it does not look like a celebration children could or would enjoy. Yet I don't remember ever having been bored. There was too much "good will" in and around us.

Dashing through the snow

In the afternoon of the second Christmas day the Sunday school children would have their great festive event. Since in our small village we had a Sunday school with children from different churches, this feast took place in the largest Protestant church. It was much further away from our home than was our own small church. Our own church was a low building, a church in the woods. But the largest village church was a tall building right on the main highway. It even had a tower.

I remember how, one Christmas, there was a whole lot of snow, a layer of almost two feet. So we children were very much worried about whether we could make it to our Sunday school feast. But to our immense delight a snow plough appeared on time. It was not a thing like the big fuel-powered machines we have today. The plow consisted of a wooden triangular platform pulled by one or two horses. When the driver invited us children to sit on the plow, it was a very special treat.

Miraculous tree

The feast started at around two or three o'clock. Since we were children from different Christian confessions, our parents had acquiesced to the presence of a huge Christmas tree in that church (but not in our own). Perhaps they, too, liked the tree, but did not want to say so.

Before the feast could start the candles on the tree had to be lit. These were real candles, all connected with each other by a white, flammable ribbon. Someone lit the lowest candle and, lo and behold, we saw the flame climb up and up from candle to



These were by far the most marvellous "fireworks" I have ever seen.

candle and where the flame had been a burning candle was left behind. These were by far the most marvellous "fireworks" I have ever seen.

The children were all seated in the front pews and the parents had their seats in the pews further down the aisle. Thus we had a good view of the miraculous Christmas tree.

Cookies and hot cocoa

A very dignified minister opened the meeting with a stylish but incomprehensible prayer. One of the Sunday school teachers who was also a teacher by profession, told the Christmas story all over again. I remember that he explained the inn in Bethlehem, the caravanserai, at great length.

Then there was a kind of recess. Hot chocolate milk from huge milk cans, served along with big cookies, was a treat for

every child and adult.

After we had returned to our seats, we sang more Christmas carols, and another Sunday school teacher, a woman, told us the thrilling story of a poor, hungry Hungarian boy in a big train which had somehow stopped somewhere in the Netherlands, where some good people took him to their home, just on Christmas night. We were so happy for the boy; Istvan was his name.

The feast came to an end and every child received a huge orange, a small bag of candies and a book.

Afterglow

Tired and somewhat drowsy we finally headed home in the early evening darkness. Here and there we saw some electric Christmas lights. Moonlight illuminated the snow and the trees.

Home again, we ate supper, while new chunks of coal were put on the fire. It was all together too good to go to bed.

Our spirits revived and we asked our mother to read us one of the books we had received at the feast. She consented — but it had to be a short one. We sat around her, and with a melodious voice she read us the story. One year, I recall, it was something called "Jessica's First Prayer." Another year, "The Little House in the Snow."

Finally, the second Christmas day ended. We went to bed without protest and soon slept like roses. It was Christmas. It was really Christmas. We were not afraid. We knew God loved us. Had he not sent us his own Son to this earth to save us?

Dr. Remkes Kooistra is a retired Christian Reformed pastor and campus chaplain who lives in Waterloo, Ont.

An interrupted but love-filled life

The diaries of Etty Hillesum

Gabe Rienks

An Interrupted Life and Letters from Westerbork by Etty Hillesum. New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1996. 376 pp.

Etty Hillesum lived in the same part of the city I lived in, Amsterdam South. The streets she walked, I walked a hundred times. From her window she could see a large open field where we used to play baseball, with the *Rijksmuseum* in the background. She was a Jew, and 27-years old when she started writing her diaries on March 9, 1941.

"Here it goes. This is a painful and well-nigh insuperable step for me, yielding up so much that has been suppressed to blank lined paper. The main difficulty, I think, is a sense of shame, and at times I'm nothing more or less than an immeasurably frightened creature."

At the same time a young Jewish girl named Anne Frank wrote her diary in that same city, hiding somewhere in an attic. In a world of so much fear, her words almost sound childish,



"In spite of everything, I still believe that people are good at heart." Etty's diaries, though much more mature, could be a sequel to Anne's. In the midst of a complete collapse she wrote, "No one is really bad, deep down."

We are not going to focus on Etty's "love life," which, in the first part of her diary, is quite chaotic. "It is difficult to be on equally good terms with God

and your body," she wrote.

Neither are we going to concentrate on the hopelessness of life in concentration camps. That was not Elly's intention, either. She was a resistance fighter in her own right, trying to discover inner resources to resist the forces from outside, who were determined to destroy their victims, body and soul.

Faith in God diminished?

We want to follow her spiritual journey. We want to know if Chaim Berman was right when he wrote, "Like Job, Etty revives one's faith in man, though it diminishes one's faith in God." Is that true? Does Etty indeed undermine our faith in God? Read her diaries and judge for yourself.

At first she writes, "When I pray, I hold a silly naive or deadly serious dialogue with what is deepest inside me, which for convenience sake I call God. I repose in myself." Prayer, to her, is a monologue within herself. Life is a closed circuit, cut off from God, where one does not need God.

Did this image of God remain the same for Etty, even when in the camp she "stood before the bare palisade of life, life's innermost framework, stripped of all outer trappings?" She wrote: "I might, of course, read the Bible each morning, but I don't think I'm ready for that. I still worry about the real meaning of the book, rather than [losing] myself in it."

Later she stated: "I have recently been picking up odd sentences from the Bible." And: "If you have given sorrow the space its gentle origins demand, then you may truly say: life is so beautiful and so rich it makes you want to believe in God."

In the meantime, signs appeared everywhere: "No trespassing for Jews," and the yellow David's star marked Etty and her people as sheep for the slaughter. However, the more the ring of horror closed in on



her, the more Etty built up her inner defences, and the more God became real to her.

"The funny thing is I don't feel in their clutches anyway, whether I stay here or I'm sent away. I feel safe in God's arms," she finally mused.

Rich life in camp

A wholesale deportation of Jews began in April 1942 — destination Westerbork, situated on the heath of Drente, a province in the northeastern Netherlands. It was a transit camp, the last stop before Auschwitz.

Etty voluntarily accompanied the first group of prisoners to Westerbork. She had a permit to go back to Amsterdam now and then. At home, however, she longed for the camp. "Those two months behind barbed wire have been the two richest and most intense months of my life, in which my highest values were so deeply confirmed. I have

learned to love Westerbork."

Friends urged her to go into hiding, but she refused. "I don't think I would feel happy if I were exempted from what so many have to suffer," she wrote.

Her life becomes an ongoing prayer. "I call myself a kneeler in training.... Sometimes I feel as if a layer of ashes were being sprinkled over my heart, as if everything [were] falling apart. But these are only brief moments; for once you have begun to walk with God, you only keep on walking with him and all of life becomes a long stroll — such a marvellous feeling."

Etty herself is surprised at how her faith has grown. "All the strength and love and faith in God which one possess has grown so miraculously in me of late."

From August 1942 to September 1943, Etty was in camp Westerbork. "At night the barracks sometimes lay in the moonlight, made out of silver

and eternity, like a play thing that had slipped from God's over-occupied hand."

Day in, day out, Etty walked through the misery and the mud of the barracks. She became the thinking heart of the camp, trying to be a balm for many wounds. A woman asked Etty, "do you think God will understand my doubts?"

Etty sees a dying old man being carried out, reciting for himself *Shema Yisrael*, the Jewish prayer for the dying. She sees a father, before departing for Auschwitz, blessing his wife and children, and being himself in turn blessed by an old rabbi.

Love and faith

Every week a train of freight cars pulled into the camp to transport 1,000 victims — men, women, old and sick people, children, babies — to their final destination. On September 7, 1942, on sudden special order from the Hague, father, mother, Mischa and Etty Hillesum were told to get ready. Etty threw a postcard out of the train which was found by a farmer.

"Christine, opening the Bible at random I find this, 'The Lord is my high tower.'

I'm sitting on a rucksack in the middle of a full freight car. We left the camp singing."

After that Etty Hillesum's voice got lost in the hell of Auschwitz. She died November 30, 1943.

Etty walked through deep valleys. "Mortal fear in every fiber. Complete collapse, lack of self confidence, panic." And yet the end was victory.

It was words from Psalm 18 that she read on that dreadful morning when they left for Auschwitz: "I love you, Yahweh, my strength, Yahweh is my rock and my bastion. I take shelter in him, he is to be praised!"

Rev. Gabe Rienks, a former Christian Reformed pastor, is now a retired pastor of the Presbyterian Church of Canada and lives in Brantford, Ont. While in Amsterdam this summer he visited the Jewish History Museum and had the privilege of spending some time with Etty's original diaries. It took 40 years before the diaries were printed, he says. It was thought there would be no market for them. Today they have been translated into several languages.

God hates me

Jan de Bree

My neighbor was a despondent man who felt no joy because he was stuck on the words recorded in Genesis 6:6: "The Lord was grieved that he had made man on the earth, and his heart was filled with pain." (That's the NIV translation. Some Bibles read "repented," and some commentators prefer "regretted.")

The part that bothered my neighbor was that God regretted creating people. This man was troubled by God's ability to change and feel regret. And my neighbor did not stop at general terms like "humankind" and "people." He moved the event closer to home and applied the text to himself. God regretted creating him.

Although we live under this cloud of rejection, we do not reject God. Instead we continually wrestle with him, not for a blessing but for his approval and love.

Can you imagine what will happen to your emotional well-being if you write your name into the Bible in place of King Saul's or Judas Iscariot's? When you do this, you see yourself as the recipient of God's anger and punishment, not of his forgiveness, because God, close to the beginning of time, regretted creating you.

And you never recover. Not even the death and resurrection of Jesus can change this irreversible event. You want so much to be loved by God, but you feel only his anger and hatred.

Unable to reject God

Feeling that God is angry with us and even hates us has another dimension. Although we live under this cloud of rejection, we do not reject God. Instead we continually wrestle with him, not for a blessing but for his approval and love, which seems never to come our way.

After begging God to love us, we have another solution at hand. We can extract ourselves out of this predicament by becoming atheists and removing God from our universe. Yet for some reason we cannot bring ourselves to do this. Maybe we fear that God will punish us with a calamity should we reject him. Not only do we feel God's anger and hatred, but we fear that he will hurt us (just as he

destroyed the world with a flood) should we leave this unhappy relationship.

Can you imagine what attending church is like when you are burdened by such feelings? Week after week you listen to the sermon as if it is intended for you. Each word spoken from the pulpit is directed at you as God's rebuke. You hear that you are not good enough. You must do better. You must repent. You must confess your sin. You must. You should. You can't. You have to try.

Then you hear that you do not have to try because you cannot save yourself. God has to save you. Then you hear that God loves some and that only some are chosen. You conclude that you are not among the elect and that God hates you like he hated Esau.

Can you imagine the struggle that goes on inside of you? On the one hand you believe in a God who can love you, and on the other you feel hated by him, and maybe by other people as well, and you even hate yourself. You are a true believer. You may possess enough inner strength to shoulder this, but you also know that you are stuck. You know that it is habitual and that it is difficult to quit thinking of God as hateful and angry.

Where to go?

You don't like it, but it is almost normal to live with these thoughts and feelings. If only there were a chemical solution to this problem, a pill to change the feeling that God hates you. Maybe somewhere there is a helpful diet, a number of important vitamins and minerals and an exercise plan that will increase those feel-good chemicals in your brain to offset the feeling that God hates you.

We know of tentative solutions out there, in books, in someone's mind, in a friend's home, in a therapist's office. And if not solutions, at least people who are willing to tackle this problem and make their hands dirty troubleshooting.

Of course, we do not want glib answers, especially not from those that say we must throw ourselves onto Jesus. That won't do because we don't trust God not to hurt us. Maybe we need to listen to someone who is caricatured as a hard-nosed believer known for writing about our sinfulness. How about John Calvin?

A bad start

John Calvin, known as a stalwart, even severe theologian, appears to be an unlikely candidate

as a man to ask for pastoral advice. First, let's read what he has to say about Genesis 6:6.

Oh no! We expect great insight from this genius, and John says God did not really regret having created man because God cannot change. He says those words were written by the Holy Spirit to accommodate God's Word to our human understanding.

How does Calvin know the motives of the Holy Spirit? Has he a special connection to the Spirit that we do not have? This is not a good start. And this is definitely not helpful for us who have a jaundiced view of people who try to explain away difficult texts.

But let's keep digging. John Calvin may have a little something tucked away in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. This book comes in two volumes, lots to read through. At points we cringe because he writes forcefully about God's wrath and vengeance against the wicked. And he writes extensively and graphically of human wickedness. We are afraid of John Calvin. He may be a hard-nosed fellow quick to relegate us to the ranks of the wicked. We are nervous around John Calvin. Although we see ourselves as wicked and hated, we do not like it when he describes us as such.

Correct portrayal

You have his fat book in your hands and you browse. The parts that you find interesting are in the first volume, where you read: "God's word to Adam was, 'You shall surely die' [Gen. 2:17]. God's word to Cain was, 'The blood of your brother cries out to me from the earth' [Gen. 4:10]. But these words are so far from being capable of establishing faith that they can of themselves do nothing but shake it... Where our

conscience sees only indignation and vengeance, how can it fail to tremble and be afraid? or to shun the God whom it dreads?" (Book III, Chap. II, 6).

So John Calvin knows about those Bible passages that strike fear in your heart. He describes the havoc that occurs within you, he

cause of despair for the saints is to feel God's hand in their ruin..." (Book III, Chap. II, 21).

As we read, we notice that John Calvin can look into the believer's troubled heart and into those unsettling Scripture passages while still singing the praises of God's grace. He suggests that we turn to God's mercy and benevolence when we are faced with God's wrath and vengeance.

"Accordingly, we need the promise of grace, which can testify to us that the Father is merciful; since we can approach him in no other way, and upon grace alone the heart of man can rest" (Book III, Chap. II, 7).

Sweetness of grace

Calvin speaks about God's goodness, his mercy and his grace as if they were delicious food stuffs or attractive colors. He uses phrases like "the sweetness and delightfulness of grace" probably because he has read all the Psalms and knows how to poetically celebrate God. And because, we can assume, he experienced it himself.

When we spend much of our spiritual life circling around a feeling of being hated by God, we may not trust ourselves when we read Scripture or listen to a sermon. This may be a good time for us to seek some communion of the saints with a famous saint like John Calvin, who understood that believers struggle with God's wrath and vengeance. It can be a way of affirming that our pain is real. Imagine John Calvin as your spiritual mentor. Here is a fellow believer who looks at God's anger and vengeance while also seeing God's goodness, mercy and grace.

Jan de Bree is a member of First Christian Reformed Church in Duncan, B.C. He is a youth and family counsellor.



Agriculture

The King was here — in the barn

From the comfort of our farm home the family came spilling out into the December dark all cloaked, muffled and wondering. With some difficulty, my wife and I had kept secret a plan to give our tribe, now numbering 13 and two more on the way, a special feeling of the atmosphere of the first Christmas. This would be in a real barn redolent with stable smells and with farm animals in silent cud-chewing contentment.

Usually I am uncomfortable with the many layers of wrappings around Christmas in our part of the world. The seasonal bundle is exhausting to produce, tends to exist for its own purposes rather than relating to the original event, and when unwrapped often leaves us with a let-down feeling. Yet, particularly for the young and impressionable, the occasion is pregnant with possibilities for memorable influence.

We set out on our journey, boots crunching the snow. Beyond the yard light, stars twinkled overhead and we lit our own star and carried it in front of us on the end of a long pole. As the "star" pushed back the dark we followed, singing "We Three Kings Of Orient Are." The clues to our secret were becoming pretty obvious. But we trudged on past various lamb pens and haystacks, wending our way among a collection of buildings which, in the shadow, could have been a darkened village.

There was nothing regal about our procession, though royalty we are in God's Kingdom: five-year-old Rachel, half-scared by the dark, trusting but asking myriad questions: Olivia, one-and-a-half-year-old fully-taxed; uncles making little jokes shushed by their spouses. The few of us in on the secret kept everyone moving. Blaze, the dog, and three cats completed the entourage.

Using all our senses

When we reached our destination, the wandering star was planted outside where its light could shine through a window into the barn. Through the opened top of the Dutch door we could see reflected on the walls the flickering glow of the flames of a small fire. Inside, features softly lit by the fire were a few

COUNTRY COUNTERCULTURE

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sheep, a miniature donkey borrowed for the occasion, and a cow with her calf born out of season a month previous. It was she, with her new calf bedded in straw on the snow, that had given us the idea for this adventure.

All eyes were drawn back to the fire, and there in the shadows was a mother quietly sitting with her baby. A gasp of surprise and recognition came from Rachel who knows the Christmas story. The significance was intensified when she saw that it was her own mother and new baby brother, Matthew.

We all knew that Jesus' arrival into the world was as a baby into just such a place: damp, cold, dirty, dark and smelly, but it helped to use all of our senses to take it in. Neither we nor any other human, including God's own chosen people Israel, could conceive of the King of kings entering the world in such ignoble circumstances. Words failed us as we stood there, but the wonder of how God works were expressed well enough for the moment by singing "Away In a Manger."

I'm not sure how successful was our surprise. Some people aren't easily surprised. But I myself had an unanticipated realization. In my own family that evening in the barn, the Old and New Testaments came together. Rachel was there, whose namesake was an important ancestor of Jesus. And Isaiah was there, sharing the name of a famous Old Testament herald of Jesus' coming. And the baby in our manger, though not named Jesus, was Matthew, the name of one of Jesus' disciples.

The significance of our grandchildren's names suddenly hit me. Generation after generation God fulfills his purposes, and the promise is to thousands of generations of those who love him and keep his commandments. Christmas is the always relevant celebration of the advent of Jesus our Savior.

This family experience exists, so far, only in the mind of the author. Only the names are real. (Vern Gleddie owns a sheep ranch outside Edmonton, Alta.)

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Will farmers boldly go where no one has gone before?



Asian economic flu is causing major headaches for Ontario farmers.

Elbert van Donkersgoed

The turbulence in international financial markets — the economic Asian flu — is causing major headaches for Ontario farmers. And it's not because farmers have been putting their profits into mutual funds.

Producer prices for some farm products have crashed. Pork has dropped to prices not seen since the 1950s.

Today, the pork producers think tank of the Christian Farmers Federation (CFFO) is meeting on short notice to analyze the implications for family farmers. Recently farm leaders, agriculture ministers and senior civil servants gathered in Ottawa to start discussions on an assistance program that will put a bottom under this producer price quagmire.

This unhappy circumstance has its roots in three kinds of deflation: technology deflation, trade deflation and financial exuberance deflation. Each of these are eroding farm prices. Together, they spell tough times.

Technology deflation: Farmers have a long history of aggressively adopting new technology and fine-tuning its use so that they can produce more food. When we take the extra product to market we often find that consumers do not want more or are not willing to pay more. The producer price deflates. We have done this for decades — our consumers have benefited from some of the lowest priced foods in the world.

Trade deflation: In 1989 the Berlin Wall came down and ushered in a new world paradigm — one super power, the United States. That super

power has consistently called for open markets, for freer trade. Since the early '90s markets have been opening up. The North American Free Trade Agreement has made the 49th parallel more porous. The Uruguay round of trade talks created a new World Trade Organization.

Freer trade means sharing markets with many more producers. Buyers have more producers from which to choose. They tend to choose those with the lowest prices. Freer trade is starting to make a difference — the producer price deflates.

Financial exuberance deflation: In the early '90s Japan's stock market retreated 63 per cent, 12 to 15 per cent of all loans are bad. Last year the Asian tigers followed. They took producer prices for many commodities down with them. There's still a market for our farm products in the east, but at fire sale prices.

Just yesterday I had a visit from a sales agent for an Australia livestock enterprise. He's based in Ontario and had just clinched a deal to bring a 40-foot container of Australia meat products into North America — at a lower price than Canadian producers would accept. That container has been destined for one of the former "tigers."

Three kinds of deflation have combined to drive farmers where no one has gone before. Will we go boldly?

Elbert van Donkersgoed is executive director of the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario and publisher of Earthkeeping Ontario. The original version of this "Corner Post" was prepared for CFCO Radio in Chatham, Ont.

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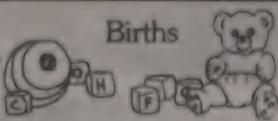
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Classified Rates	Births	Anniversaries	Obituaries	Obituaries
<p>(Revised February 1, 1995)</p> <p>Births \$25.00</p> <p>Marriages & Engagements \$40.00</p> <p>Anniversaries \$45.00</p> <p>2-column anniversaries \$90.00</p> <p>Obituaries \$45.00</p> <p>Notes of thanks \$35.00</p> <p>Birthdays \$40.00</p> <p>All other one-column classified advertisements: \$15.00 per column inch. NOTE: Minimum fee is \$15.00. Letter under file number \$35.00 extra. Photos: \$25.00 additional charge.</p> <p>Note: All rates shown above are GST inclusive</p> <p>ATTENTION!</p> <p>a) <i>Christian Courier</i> reserves the right to print classifieds using our usual format.</p> <p>b) A sheet with information about an obituary sent by funeral homes is not acceptable since it leads to errors and confusion.</p> <p>c) Photographs sent by fax are not acceptable. If you wish a photo included, send us the original.</p> <p>d) <i>Christian Courier</i> will not be responsible for any errors due to handwritten or phoned-in advertisements.</p> <p>e) The rate shown above for classifieds covers any length up to five column inches. <i>Christian Courier</i> reserves the right to charge for additional column inches at the rate of \$15.00 per column inch (GST incl.).</p> <p>NEWLYWEDS & NEW PARENTS</p> <p>We offer a one-year subscription for only \$25.00 (GST incl.) to the couples whose wedding is announced in the <i>Christian Courier</i> and to the parents of the child whose birth announcement appears in our paper. To facilitate matters, we encourage those who request the wedding or birth announcement to enclose \$25.00 and the couple's correct address.</p> <p>Christian Courier 4-261 Martindale Rd. St. Catharines, ON L2W 1A1 Phone: (905) 682-8311 Fax: (905) 682-8313</p> <p>Our new e-mail address: ccadpromo@aol.com</p>	 <p>HOEKSTRA: Once again God has blessed us with a precious son and brother, CAMERON WILLIAM A brother for Jessie and Colton. Proud parents are Jim and Denise Hoekstra. Cameron is the 26th grandchild for Tinny VandenBerg of Drayton, Ont., and the 19th grandchild for Bill and Betty Hoekstra of Kitchener, Ont. The five of us live at: 15 Killamey Cr., Kitchener, ON N2E 3N1</p>	<p>Oskaloosa, Ia. Grimsby, Ont. REV. JAMES and ADRIANA VAN WEELDEN (nee DE WOLF)</p> <p>are celebrating their 55th anniversary on Dec. 28, 1998. Their children and grandchildren: James (deceased) Jeralyn Lodewyk (Clarence deceased) — Rocky Mountain House, Alta. Michael, Jeffrey (deceased). David Alan & Pamela Van Weelden — Mississauga, Ont. Mamie, Tara, Dawn Patricia Wilkie — Kitchener, Ont. Kristin, Lindsay Susan Van Weelden — Beamsville, Ont. Joel & Yvette Van Weelden — Beamsville, Ont. Benjamin, Jillian, Malorie, Megan As we celebrate God's faithfulness from generation to generation, your children rejoice because you continue to show to your grandchildren the same Christ-like example of faith, hope and love that you have shown to us throughout our lives. Address: 10 Wentworth Dr., Unit 30, Grimsby, ON L3M 5G3</p>	<p>Ganj, Fr. Grimsby, Ont. the Neth. Nov. 16, 1911 - Nov. 16, 1998 Phil. 4: 6, 7, 9</p> <p>Peacefully, in the early hours of Monday, Nov. 16, 1998, the Lord called home His child RENSKE (JOEKEMA) DRAAIESTRA Beloved wife of the late Thomas Draaiestra. Dear mother of: Atje (& Johannes, deceased) de Roos — Stoney Creek, Ont. Hinke & Geert Draaiestra — Grimsby, Ont. Mike & Jane Draaiestra — Dunnville, Ont. Francis & Henk Postma — Grimsby, Ont. Evelyn & Henk Lip — Grimsby, Ont. Frank & Harriet Draaiestra — Mt. Pleasant, Ont. Jane & Frank Day — Millgrove, Ont. Beppe of 26 grandchildren and 47 great-grandchildren. Predeceased by daughter Tjitske and grandson Thomas.</p> <p><i>Eenmaal als de stonde staat, dat dit lichaam sterven gaat, als mijn ziel uit d'aardse woon opklamt tot des Rechter's troon, Rots der eeuwen, in uw school berg mijn ziel voor den dood.</i></p> <p>Correspondence address: A. de Roos, 2 Cherrywood Dr. #515, Stoney Creek, ON L8G 2P6</p>	<p>"...He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside quiet waters. He restores my soul... Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever" (Ps. 23:2,5).</p> <p>On Nov. 29, 1998, at the age of 68 years, the Lord called CORRY HAVERKAMP (nee DYK) home to dwell with Him. Sadly missed by her husband, children and grandchildren, yet, comforted by Corry's confession and her desire to meet her Savior after a lengthy struggle with cancer (2 Cor. 4:16 - 5:8). Corry is survived by her husband Bert Haverkamp, her mother Ida Dyk (nee Mos), brother Dick and Ekka Dyk, sister Theresa and Art Morbrook, and by her children: Agnes & Martin Douma and their six children Rick & Edith DeGraaf and their five children Judy VanderZwaag and five children Ralph & Janet Haverkamp and their two children And she will also be missed by her husband's family: Jan & Roelie Haverkamp Wubbe (†) & Hennie Haverkamp John & Linie Haverkamp Joyce & Case Groenewegen Wilma & Dick Veenstra Art & Janet Haverkamp Corrie & Gerrit Vandenbroek Predeceased by her father Simon Dyk, a sister, Francis, and two grandsons. The funeral service was held at Zion United Ref. Church in Sheffield.</p>
	Birthdays			
	<p>With great joy and thankfulness to the Lord we wish to announce the 80th birthday of our mother, grandmother and great-grandmother JANE VANDEN HEUVEL on Dec. 9, 1998. Her thankful children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren are: Bert & Pat Vanden Heuvel David & Suzanne, Heather & Rob (Patricia & Stephanie), John David, Heidi Jan Vanden Heuvel Garry, Jacqui (Matthew, Samantha) John Vanden Heuvel Jonathan, Jeremy, Naomi-Lina Margaret & Andy Hiemstra Michelle, Steve Address: J. Vanden Heuvel, Apt. 402, 100 Glenhill Dr. S., Whitby, ON L1N 8R4</p>	 <p>Give thanks to the Lord for He is good, His love endures forever. It is with praise and thanksgiving that we announce the 45th wedding anniversary of our parents and grandparents JERRY and MIEN MORSINK (nee TENBRINKE)</p> <p>Congratulations Mom and Dad, Opa and Oma!</p> <p>Love from all your children and grandchildren: Eric & Linda Morsink — Cambridge, Ont. Vanessa Richard & Caroline Morsink — Montreal, Que. Hendrik, Terance, Annelies Everett & Belinda Dykstra — Surrey, B.C. Wesley</p> <p>Thank you both for the wonderful celebration we had together in Holland this past summer</p> <p>Address: 1510 Riverside Dr., #2407, Ottawa, ON K1G 4X5</p>	<p>Miscellaneous</p> <p>ONE TO ANOTHER Christian companion magazine. Hundreds of readers Canada-wide. Single issue \$5. Write to: #12 923 2nd Ave. S. Lethbridge, AB T1J 0C7</p>	<p>For Sale</p> <p>For sale: Three vinyl accordion style room dividers with tracks and hardware (approx. 20 feet long by 8 feet high). Contact Jerry Kraft at (905) 659-7638.</p>
	Job Opportunities		Personal	
	<p>PASTOR</p> <p>Houston Chr. Ref. Church in beautiful northwest British Columbia is seeking a full-time pastor to provide sound biblical preaching, ministry to youth and pastoral care. The church membership stands at 67 families; which translates into 169 professing members and 154 non-professing or baptized members. Please send a copy of your profile. A church profile is available upon request. For more information please contact:</p> <p>Rick Delau, Search Committee Houston Chr. Ref. Church Box 6, Houston, BC V0J 1Z0 Phone: (250) 845-7756 Fax: (250) 845-7578</p>	<p>39-year-old Christian single male, from the GTA, likes travel, sports, camping and spending time with family and friends, seeks caring Christian woman, 33 - 43 years, for friendship and possible long-term commitment. Send letters to File #2686, c/o Christian Courier, 4-261 Martindale Road, St. Catharines, ON L2W 1A1.</p>	<p>OUR NICKEL 1 (800) 969-4838 At <i>Christian Courier</i>, we hear you.</p>	<p>For Rent</p> <p>For rent: Boerderij (farm), all conveniences, summer and winter, in Friesland, the Neth. Reasonable. For information phone: (519) 863-2096</p>
			<p>Look for our Calendar of Events on page 19...</p>	

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Classifieds

Teachers	Teachers	Vacation	Job Opportunities
<p>Full-time Administrative Position ALLISTON, Ont.: Alliston Community Chr. School is searching for a full-time, experienced teaching principal to lead a growing inter-denominational school. The school has a present enrollment of 82 students from JK-8 with 47 supporting families and is situated in a rapidly expanding community. Job commences Aug. 1, 1999, optional 80% position negotiable. Please send resumes to:</p> <p>Harry Zantingh 22 Downey Avenue Alliston, ON L9R 1J7 (705) 435-5858 (705) 435-9212 mikel.jans@sympatico.ca</p>	<p>ST. CATHARINES, Ont.: Beacon Chr. High School invites applications for a maternity leave position in the area of English and drama beginning in mid-March of 1999. Applicants need to be qualified and need to demonstrate a love for God, a love for students, and a love for English. Please send resume and relevant information to:</p> <p>Ted Harris, Principal Beacon Chr. High School 2 O'Malley Drive St. Catharines, ON L2N 6N7 Fax: (905) 937-1130</p>	<p>Christian Guided Tours Bible Lands Cruise & Tour Nov. 3 to Nov. 18, 1999 Interested in seeing the sights where so many Biblical events took place?</p> <p>15 Wonderful Days Visit: Italy, Crete, Cypress, Rhodes, Turkey, Athens and Israel.</p> <p>FR \$4121 Cdn. (inc. cruise, air, hotel and meals) Sundays free with worship service Join us on this exciting tour For more information call: Grace or Ralph Visscher c/o Visscher's Travel & Cruise Ltd.</p> <p>1-800-811-2388 BC. Reg. #3076-2</p>	<p>PRINCIPAL</p> <p>London Parental Christian School is currently accepting applications for the position of Principal. Located in London, Ont., the London Parental Christian School is a K-8 school with an enrolment of 215 students and a teaching staff of 14 teachers. Applicants must be spiritually mature active Christians with administrative abilities and a strong commitment to Christian education. Candidates must demonstrate a strong vision for Christian education and strengths in the areas of visionary leadership, staff development and team building. Please forward resume, a minimum of 4 references, a statement of faith and a statement of philosophy of Christian education to:</p> <p>Peter Van Geest, Principal Search Committee Chair 74 Breton Park Cres., London, ON N5W 1N1 (519) 455-9014</p> <p>Application deadline is Dec. 21, 1998.</p>
<p>BRESLAU, Ont.: Woodland Chr. High School is now accepting applications for a part-time temporary teaching position for the period from mid-March to the end of June. Course to be taught include: Grade 9 and 10 French, Grade 9 mathematics, Grade 11 math for technology, Grade 11 general level biology. Please send inquiries and applications to:</p> <p>Gary Van Arragon, Principal Woodland Chr. High School R.R. #1, Breslau, ON N0B 1M0 Phone (519) 648-2114 Fax (519) 648-3402</p>	<p>WOODBRIDGE, Ont.: Toronto District Chr. High School requires an additional full-time teacher for second semester. Needed is a teacher for Grade 9 courses (science, English, geography). Please send resume, credentials and statement of faith to:</p> <p>Ren Siebenga c/o Toronto District Chr. High School 377 Woodbridge Avenue Woodbridge, ON L4L 2S8 e-mail: rsiebeng@tdchristian.on.ca</p>	<p>Spinal Muscular Atrophy is the leading genetic cause of infant death. Every year, countless Canadian kids are diagnosed with SMA. Which means they may not see their first day of school. Sadly, there still isn't a cure. But until there is, there's us. And until we find a cure, we're making the lives of people with neuromuscular disorders better. Call and donate, because together we can put neuromuscular disorders where they belong. Behind us. 1 800 567-CURE</p>	<p>Timothy Christian School (Toronto) is seeking applications for the definite position of</p> <p>PRINCIPAL beginning September 1, 1999</p> <p>Our school of 196 ethnically diverse students (K-8) was established in 1958 and is situated in northwest Toronto. If you are interested in working with a dedicated staff of 13 and being supported by a committed Christian school community, we invite you to apply for this position. We look forward to assisting you in using your talents and gifts in our school to help prepare God's children for service in his kingdom. Please send your resume, a statement of faith, and your philosophy of education to:</p> <p>Principal Search Committee Timothy Christian School 28 Elmhurst Drive Rexdale, ON M9W 2J5</p> <p>Enquiries may be made by phoning Mr. William Groot (416) 743-2554 or e-mailing Mr. Jeff de Walle at jdewalle@andec.on.ca</p>
<p>DRAYTON, Ont.: Calvin Chr. School is looking for a teacher to fill a maternity leave position. You will be teaching a Grade 1 / 2 class of 21 students starting on the Monday following Spring Break and going to the end of June. If you have a Christian School Teacher Certificate and/or an Ontario Teacher Certificate and would like to join an energetic staff and if you love to teach young children, we would like to hear from you. Please send a letter of application and resume to:</p> <p>Calvin Chr. School Box 141 High Street Drayton, ON N0G 1P0</p> <p>Attn: Willy Katerberg, Principal by December 10, 1998.</p>	<p>DCA Travel SERV. INC. Flights Cruises & Packages Head Office Canada wide 1-800-667-2525 TORONTO 416-224-5211 BRADFORD 905-775-6763 E-mail: dca_travel@compuserve.com Emergency Service Available Business & Vacation Travel Worldwide! Martinair - KLM - vacation</p>	<p>Muscular Dystrophy Association of Canada</p> 	<p>Ottawa Christian School is seeking applications for the position of</p> <p>PRINCIPAL</p> <p>Our school is a vibrant and growing non-denominational community of 200 students and 11 teachers. We offer a strong educational program from Junior Kindergarten to Grade 8. We are looking for an energetic and dynamic leader with a strong vision for the development of Christian education in the nation's capital, and the ability to communicate that vision to the community. The position includes both teaching and administrative responsibilities.</p> <p>Interested candidates are invited to submit a letter of application and curriculum vitae before Dec. 31, 1998, to:</p> <p>Principal Search Committee c/o Mr. I. Shugart 2286 Rembrandt Rd., Ottawa, ON K2B 7P5</p> <p>For further information, please call (613) 596-2619</p> <p>Ottawa Chr. School is a member of the Ontario Alliance of Christian Schools.</p>
<p>Church News</p> <p>Christian Reformed Church Call extended: - to First CRC of Brampton, Ont., Rev. Dirk Evans, previously Teaching Chaplain at St. Michael's Hospital in Toronto, Ont.</p>	<p>Christmas Celebration</p> <p>Join the Liberation Choir in an evening of song and Scripture readings. The Christmas sing along will be held on Friday, Dec. 18, 1998, at 8 p.m., at St. Paul's Presbyterian Church, 70 James St. South, Hamilton, Ont. The choir is under the direction of Willem Van Suydam and accompanied by Dr. John Vander Tuin. Your admission is a free will offering for the Russian ministry of the Back to God Hour.</p>		

Classifieds

Eggnog Gâteau



1 pkg (510 g) Betty Crocker* White Supermoist* Cake Mix
 1 1/4 cups (300 mL) water
 1/3 cup (75 mL) oil
 3 eggs
 3 tsp (15 mL) imitation rum extract
 1 1/2 tsp (7 mL) nutmeg
 1 tub (340 g) Betty Crocker* Fluffy White Whipped* Deluxe Frosting
 cocoa, nutmeg and/or chocolate curls
 1. Preheat oven to 350°F (180°C). Generously grease and flour two 9-in (1.5 L) round pans. Prepare and bake cake mix according to package instructions, adding 1 tsp (15 mL) each imitation rum extract and nutmeg to batter before baking.
 2. Stir remaining rum extract and nutmeg into frosting. Frost cakes as for layer cakes, according to instructions on inside of frosting label.
 3. Dust with nutmeg or cocoa; garnish with chocolate curls.
 Preparation time: 20 mins.
 Cooking time: 26 to 31 mins.
 Makes 14 servings
 *TM Reg'd. - News Canada

Sweet & Tasty
Sweet Tart
Dough

□ 1 1/2 cups (375 mL) all-purpose flour
 □ 1/3 cup (75 mL) icing sugar
 □ 3/4 cup (150 mL) Lactantia My Country Cultured Unsalted Butter, chilled
 □ 1 large egg yolk
 □ 1 tbsp (15 mL) heavy cream (NC)—In a food processor or using a mixer, process flour and icing sugar until well blended. Add Lactantia My Country Unsalted Butter, process or mix until the mixture resembles peas. Whisk the egg yolk with heavy cream and add to flour mixture. Process until mixture comes together. Remove from machine, pat into a circle and chill for about 2 hours. Roll out and use according to recipe. For a fresh fruit tart, roll the dough and place into a 9"-10" (23-25 cm) fluted pan, making sure you push the dough into the crease between the sides and bottom of the tart tin. Freeze for 30 minutes. Preheat oven to 375°F (190°C) and bake for 10-12 minutes or until the shell is golden brown.

Serves 6

Note: This is a cookie-like crust, it is easy to work with and can be re-rolled without sacrificing tenderness. This dough can be baked blind without the need for beans. The recipe is perfect for lemon, fresh fruit or chocolate tarts.

- News Canada

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 (403) 465-3500 • Fax (403) 465-3534 • www.kingsu.ab.ca

Job Opportunities

Pacific Christian School
Victoria, B.C.
Secondary Assistant Principal

Pacific Christian School is a well-established interdenominational Christian school with 775 students in grades Pre-K-12. The school draws its enrollment from 80 different churches representing 14 different denominations in the greater Victoria area.

Assistant Principal applications are being solicited for the Secondary School for the 1999/2000 school year. The successful applicant would join a high school administration team in overseeing the operations of a secondary school staff of 26. Candidates must be committed Christians, team players, able to articulate a sound vision of Christian education and be certifiable by the B.C. College of Teachers. Enquiries may be directed to the secondary principal. Please submit letter of application, resume and statement of faith to Search Committee in care of:

John Meeselink, Secondary Principal, by Jan. 15, 1999.

Pacific Christian School
 654 Agnes Street, Victoria, BC V8Z 2E6
 Phone: (250) 479-4532/Fax: (250) 479-3511
 E-mail: pcshs@islandnet.com

Special Education Coordinator

The Abbotsford Christian School Society is accepting applications for the **Special Education Coordinator's position** beginning in the 1999/2000 school year. This position involves coordinating services for special education students in an inclusive setting at the two K to 7 campuses as well as the Grade 8 to 12 campus. Applicants should have a minimum of 5 years teaching experience with training and/or experience in Special Education, and possess or be eligible for BC Teacher Certification. Tasks include the following:

- Supervising teaching assistants
- Arranging and coordinating contracted support services
- Coordinating the teams providing special education
- Serving as a resource person with classroom teachers
- Administering and reporting on special testing
- Working with individual students

For further information contact: **Dwight Moodie, Principal, Abbotsford Chr. Secondary Campus, 35011 Old Clayburn Road, Abbotsford, BC V2S 7L7. Telephone: (604) 850-5342.**

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Job Opportunities

PRINCIPAL

The Red Deer Chr. School is currently accepting applications for the position of principal. The position includes both administrative and teaching responsibilities. The Red Deer Chr. School is a K-9 school with an enrolment of approximately 200 students, located in Red Deer, Alta.

Applicants must: be a professing Christian, have previous administrative experience, have a strong commitment to Christian Education, and have a B.Ed. (minimum) (must be Alberta Certified). The successful candidate will demonstrate strength in the areas of visionary leadership, staff development, commitment to excellence, building relationships and administrative skills.

Salary: The compensation package includes a teacher's salary schedule multiplied by the administrative responsibility factor of 1.2. Benefits include medical, dental and life insurance coverage. The current teacher salary range for the Red Deer Chr. School for 1998-99 is \$27,471 - \$42,846.

Application process: Send application, including cover letter, resume, a statement of faith and a statement of philosophy of Christian Education to:

Gord Inglis, Chairman Principal Search Committee
 Red Deer Christian School
 5210 - 61 Street, Red Deer, AB T4N 6N8

Application deadline: Dec. 15, 1998
 (All applications will be acknowledged by Jan. 15, 1999).

CHURCH ADMINISTRATOR

First Christian Reformed Church, London, Ontario

Large Christian Reformed Church with multiple staff has an opening for a **full-time administrator**.

The successful applicant will be fully devoted to Jesus Christ, must be a team player, have the gift of administration, and have proven interpersonal as well as computer skills.

Duties include maintaining the membership database, managing the policies and procedures of the organization, serving as clerk of council, publishing the weekly bulletin, managing the church calendar, etc.

Please send resumes by Dec. 21, 1998, to:
 First Christian Reformed Church, 507 Talbot St., London, ON N6A 2S5, Fax: (519) 432-7613, or call (519) 432-7997. Attention: Lead Pastor.

Homestead Residential and Support Services
 is looking for a

Director of Operations
(half-time position)

Interested applicants should have relevant experience with the following:

- * Property/Financial Management
- * Fund Raising
- * Acquisition of property/facilities

Please fax resume by Dec. 15, 1998, to:

Board of Directors
 c/o G. Stelpstra
 Fax: (905) 318-2778

Classifieds

Job Opportunities

Miscellaneous

Miscellaneous

Located in an attractive city on the scenic shores of Lake Huron, Lambton Christian School is a parentally run Christian school recognized for offering a quality education from Kindergarten to OAC. A non-denominational school serving 280 students and their families, operating on two campuses in Sarnia, Lambton Chr. School Society is currently seeking a

**Director of Education
and Principal of the Secondary School**

Our vision for the future includes expansion of the student body and supporting community, and continued development of an integrated Christian curriculum directed by an effective administrative team. The qualified candidate will be an educator, preferably an experienced, certified principal, with demonstrated success in leadership positions within the Christian education and/or business community. The ability to clearly articulate an integrated Christian worldview and its implications for education is mandatory. This newly created, full-time position, will be filled by an innovative, creative individual capable of directing and leading a period of growth. If you feel challenged by this role, send your curriculum-vitae, a statement of faith, and your philosophy of Christian education to:

Search committee, Lambton Chr. School Society
c/o Lambton Chr. High School

295 Essex Street, Sarnia, ON N7T 4S3, Phone: (519) 337-9122

For further information, contact Dick Metselaar, Search Committee Chair at (519) 383-1268 or e-mail to: tdegrout@ebtech.net or fax to: (519) 869-2328 (application deadline, Jan. 4, 1999).

Diabetes: Tips for Foot Care

(NC)—To prevent foot problems from developing, people with diabetes should follow a few basic rules for foot care:

Check feet daily for cuts, bumps, bruises, etc. Use a mirror if necessary.

Wash feet daily using warm water and mild soap. Those with neuropathy, or reduced sensitivity in the foot, should check water temperature with wrist before entering. Dry feet carefully, especially between the toes.

Because diabetics often sweat less than normal, put moisturizer on feet before putting on shoes and socks to prevent dry, cracked skin.

Wear thick, soft socks and avoid wearing stockings with seams.

Avoid going barefoot.

Do not remove calluses, which act as protective padding. Avoid using harsh chemicals such as wart or callus removers on feet.

Wear shoes that fit well and break in new shoes gradually. Examine shoes for tears or sharp edges that might injure feet.

Visit a podiatrist and get a gait and pressure analysis to see if any areas of your feet are prone to excess pressure. Get orthotics to relieve areas of undue stress. It is a good idea to get an annual gait analysis as a preventative measure.

Get the doctor to check your feet during your regular check ups.

More information is available on the Internet at www.footmaxx.com or by calling 1-800-779-FOOT.

- News Canada

The Ontario ALLIANCE of Christian Schools

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DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR

You have opportunity to assist Christian schools in Ontario with the challenge of financing a distinctively Christian and Canadian curriculum K-12. This position is expected to be filled in January of 1999.

Inquiries and applications should be directed in writing to:

Dr. Adrian Guldemond, Executive Director
Ontario Alliance of Christian Schools
617 Highway #53 East
Ancaster ON L9G 3K9
905-648-2100 905-648-2110
e-mail: oacs@oacs.org web site: www.oacs.org

Events

Calendar of Events

Please submit only brief items. Placement is subject to space availability. Lengthy, multiple-event announcements will be rejected. We reserve the right to edit the material and to charge a nominal, per issue fee per item inserted.

Dec. 12 Christmas concert by the Ontario Chr. Music Assembly under the direction of Leendert Kooij, Andre Knevel (organ), in the Central United Church (King & Young Sts.) Welland, Ont., at 8 p.m. Admission \$10. For info. call (905) 835-8583.

Dec. 12 "Komt allen tezamen." Dutch kerstzang avond in the Immanuel CRC, Mohawk Rd. W. Hamilton, Ont., at 7:30 p.m.

Dec. 16 Christmas concert by the Ontario Chr. Music Assembly under the direction of Leendert Kooij, Andre Knevel (organ), in the Maranatha CRC, Bowmanville, Ont., at 8 p.m. Admission: Adults \$10, Students \$6, Children under 12 free. For info. call (905) 623-7196

Dec. 18 Organ recital by Jonathan Oldengarm, 7:30 p.m., Central Presbyterian Church, Hamilton, Ont. Info.: (519) 338-3214.

Dec. 18 An evening of song and Scripture reading with the Liberation Choir under the direction of Willem Van Suydam at St. Paul's Presbyterian Church (70 James St. S.) Hamilton, Ont., 8 p.m.

Dec. 19 Christmas concert by the Ontario Chr. Music Assembly under the direction of Leendert Kooij, Andre Knevel (organ), in the Willowdale United Church (Kenneth Avenue), Willowdale, Ont., at 8 p.m. Admission: Adults \$10, Students \$6, Children under 12 free. For info. call (416) 636-9779

Dec. 19 Annual Christmas sing along concert with the St. Thomas ladies' choir and the St. Thomas male choir in Knox Presb. Church, St. Thomas, Ont., at 7:30 p.m. Free-will offering towards Christmas Care.

Dec. 20 Celebration of 55 years of ministry of Rev. Remkes Kooistra at the Waterloo CRC (209 Baringer Rd.), Waterloo, Ont.

YOUR CHANCE TO TELL US

We're planning for 1999 — and beyond

Some things have already changed; e.g., we're using full color for some issues.

Other things are about to change; e.g., Bert Witvoet will be retiring this summer. But we must change in other ways in order to attract and

keep subscribers.

We'd like to receive input from you on future changes.

My comments: (add another sheet, if necessary)

on C.C.'s content

on its contributors

on paper stock or layout

other

My donation:

\$20 \$40 \$80

\$100 Other

You can help us implement these changes by giving a year-end donation to Reformed Faith Witness. We'll send you a tax receipt in return.

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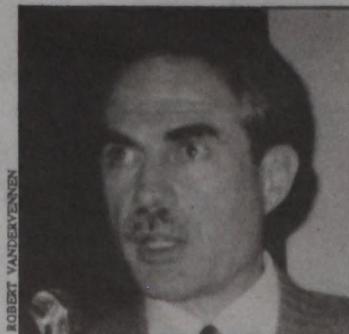
Genetics and the future of humanity a hot research topic

Robert VanderVennen

HAMILTON, Ont. — The hottest area of research worldwide these days may be genetic research, with both governments and private companies pouring in buckets of money. Of great interest is replacing genes in humans, which may change even the core of humanity for people affected.

Christians urgently need to be engaged with research scientists and government leaders in studying the ethical aspects of this research, Ronald Cole-Turner told 80 people at the annual meeting of the Canadian Scientific and Christian Affiliation held at McMaster University. Cole-Turner is a professor of theology and ethics at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary. He keeps a sharp eye on research results in this area which are reported in the news almost weekly.

Turner identified nine areas of current genetic research, includ-



Ronald Cole-Turner

ing cloning. There is the human genome project, an undertaking to map the location of all human genes. There are genes and gene clusters that predispose people to certain attitudes and actions, such as a Dutch family in which low intelligence and high impulse behavior was correlated with a defective gene.

Genetic testing for conditions such as cystic fibrosis may lead parents to want an abortion, and somatic cell modification can

change cells in the body by changing genes. There is stem cell research and changing the human germ line, which may enhance resistance to a certain disease.

Blind acceleration

There needs to be widespread international public information about this kind of research and its consequences. Religion should not be used merely to try to stop all this, said Cole-Turner, but as an American he is concerned about what he sees as a typical American arrogance that they themselves can handle such issues, as they handled, by themselves, the issue of nuclear weapons in the 1940s.

"Is this where God is leading us?" is the kind of question Cole-Turner says we should be asking. He himself is "profoundly ambivalent" about it all. He is fearful of a blind acceleration into an uncharted future.

He says that we may want to

change in ways that make us better people, not just people who are cosmetically better. One reasonable approach, he said, is to adopt a "heuristics of fear," imagining worst-case scenarios as research moves ahead.

More broadly, Cole-Turner asked whether we know how to use "God" and "technology" in the same sentence. Genetic research is more technology than science, he said, noting that technology aims to change parts of the world while science aims to discover and understand what exists.

We need to ask whether technology is an aspect of our human fallenness or whether it is a way to undo the effects of our sinfulness, he says.

The key to the question, said Cole-Turner, is what does it mean to be a human being. Christian theology needs to learn from science, and it has a lot of catching up to do on genetic research.

News Digest

Santa's too thin

LONDON, Eng. — The Santa Claus business has fallen on lean times. The Ministry of Fun, an entertainment agency based in London, Eng., reports a serious shortage of actors aspiring to play Santa this year, partly because of healthier eating trends. The firm demands that its Santas be convincing, which means an authentic fat belly is required, reports the *Toronto Star*. "Kids can spot padding," says agency director Julian Pearson.

Island fights bad reputation

SYDNEY, Australia — Aborigines on Australia's Palm Island have been considering legal action against the Guinness Book of Records for reporting that their island home is the "most violent place on Earth outside a combat zone," reports Reuters news service.

The book's 1999 edition lists Palm Island in the "Dangerous Zones" category as the "Most Likely Place In Which To Die Young." It says the island's murder rate is 15 times higher than that of the entire Australian state of Queensland (to which it belongs), life expectancy for islanders is 40 years, and youth suicide is the highest per capita in the world.

"The Palm Island council is considering taking legal action," says Jenny Prior, of Australia's highest indigenous body, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission. She says the report "is very insulting and hurtful. It is based on misinformation."

Torah peddler captured

NEW YORK, N.Y. — A man peddling stolen Torahs and other Jewish artifacts was arrested after the rabbi he thought was interested in the goods turned out to be an undercover cop. Charlie Jones, 31, was arrested in New York City recently after he allegedly took \$12,000 in exchange for two Torahs, two crowns, and handmade breastplates that adorned the Jewish scrolls. The artifacts had been stolen from a synagogue in Englewood, N.J., in October, and were worth \$100,000 (US), according to the *Toronto Star*.

Tollendale beckons seniors to retirement complex



All smiles for the happy spade work: From l. to r.: MPP Joe Tascona; board chair Henk Borgdorff; Mayor Janice Laking of Barrie.

CC Staff

BARRIE, Ont. — Another Christian retirement village is going to rise from the ground in Ontario — this time on the shores of Lake Simcoe. On Nov. 2 an official sod-turning ceremony took place at the future site of Tollendale Village, a 14-acre tract overlooking a treed valley in Barrie, 50 kilometres north of Toronto.

The "village" will be a large Christian senior's community with approximately 250 independent apartments, 20 semi-detached garden homes and a 70-unit care building staffed by multi-skilled individuals. The buildings will be a maximum of three stories high and will be interconnected with a central "amenities" building containing lounges, billiards room, craft and activity areas, dining room, barbershop, beauty salon, banking machine and a large multi-purpose hall for social events.

and church services.

Over 150 people, including local dignitaries, government officials and the media were present for the sod-turning. According to project manager Sid Tjeerdsma, the first phase of the building project is expected to be completed by September next year.

Equity leasing (buying into the unit) ranges in price from \$76,000 to \$154,000 (garden units); and regular leasing (renting) ranges from \$720 (suites) per month to \$1,443 per month. The projected occupancy date is Fall 1999.

Leasing is going very well, says Albert VanderMey, contact person for Tollendale suites. So far, 50 of the 66 apartments in the first building and seven of the 20 garden units have been leased. There are already 12 clients on the waiting list for the next phase.

Thinkbit

Any husband who says, 'My wife and I are completely equal partners,' is talking about either a law firm or a hand of bridge.

Bill Cosby

Will the wings of Faith and Reason support us?

Pope John Paul II's recent encyclical

George Vandervelde

In a world in which truth appears as an orphan, emaciated, abandoned — perhaps missing — the Pope has weighed in with his most recent encyclical. Its title sounds rather limp and lifeless: "Faith and Reason" (*Fides et Ratio*). That seems more fitting for an academic lecture than for an encyclical, which is after all, a pastoral letter sent to all the bishops of the Roman Catholic Church. Yet, despite the title, the Pope's concern is the actual life of human beings in our world. He reminds the bishops that they are "witnesses of divine and catholic truth."

Faith and reason, the Pope states, are "like two wings on which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of truth." In our time, these wings have been torn apart.

As he states in his opening pages, he wishes to address the fundamental questions of human life: "Who am I? Where have I come from and where am I going? Why is there evil? What is there after this life?" According to the Pope the prevailing wisdom of our age makes an answer to those questions impossible. For these questions can be answered only when faith and reason work in tandem, as it were. Faith and reason, he states, are "like two wings on which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of truth."

In our time, these wings have been torn apart. Or to use a different image, a disastrous divorce has taken place between believing and knowing. This "pernicious separation" mangles not only our Christian faith, but also human life and our culture. As to faith, this divorce transforms Christianity into superstition or a myth.

Christianity is assumed to have no relation to truth and therefore no relation to everyday life, our world and its problems. As to human life and culture, severing reason from faith leads to despair regarding our ability to know truth, and thus fosters the idea that everything is relative. One opinion is as good as another — or as bad. And thus, human beings are set

adrift on an ocean of meaninglessness.

For the Pope, faith and reason are two ways of getting at truth. Reason is the activity of the human mind. It asks why things are the way they are: why is there a world and who or what is responsible for it? According to John Paul, reason has an innate drive to move beyond what can be seen and touched, to ask ultimate questions: "How does what we see hold together, how does it make sense?" The academic discipline whose bread and butter it is to ask these questions is philosophy.

Faith, no less than reason, is another way of getting at truth. Or rather, faith proceeds from truth. The church proclaims that Jesus Christ is "the way, and the truth, and the life" (John 14:6). Thus the Christian community has "received the gift of the ultimate truth about human life." The Pope, therefore, points out that among the many ways that the church is called to serve humanity, paramount is a responsibility of a special kind: "the *diakonia* of truth." The church takes on this truth ministry because "at the origin of our life of faith, there is an encounter, unique in kind, which discloses a mystery hidden for long ages but which is now revealed," Christ, the Word made flesh.

The discipline which reflects the truth which is received in faith, is, of course, theology. In traditional Roman Catholic terms, the Pope elaborates on the relation between truth of reason and the truth of faith. As the opening image indicates, disaster awaits the poor bird whose wings refuse to co-operate with one another. Accordingly, a chapter of the encyclical entitled, "I believe in order to understand," is followed by a chapter entitled, "I understand in order to believe."

Does life make sense?

The entire encyclical is driven by a deep concern about one of the most fundamental issues that faces all Christians, indeed all human beings: does life, my life, make any sense? Does it have purpose and meaning? And how can I know that with some measure of certainty?

Christians confront the question more specifically: does faith in Jesus Christ answer such questions, or is my faith merely *my* faith, a response that is part of a

faith community's subjective attempt to make some sense of that which seems to make no sense. Why should my faith in Christ be true any more or less than faith in Allah? Is there any solid basis for morality? Or are we condemned to simply making the best of what are often bad situations?

Fundamentally, the pope is passionately concerned about a world that seems to be lurching towards a dark night of nihilism, of total meaninglessness. The Pope characterizes our contemporary situation as being involved in "a crisis of meaning," "radical doubt, which can easily lead to skepticism, indifference or to various forms of nihilism."

Not a wing

Despite this laudable, broadly pastoral concern, and the many profound statements about the centrality and wonder of truth, something is strangely awry in the way in which the Pope attempts to seek an anchorage for truth in our time. Or to return to the pinion image, something is amiss in the way John Paul projects the flight of the human spirit. The wings are misshapen, especially the wings called "reason."

Cardinal Ratzinger, one of the most powerful cardinals at the Vatican and the head of the Roman Catholic office for preserving and defending orthodox teaching, has hailed the Pope's encyclical as "a hymn to reason," a hymn that is sung so that reason "might fully recover the role it had during the most significant movements of Christian thought." Therein lies the key problem of this encyclical.

"Reason" is not a wing of the human spirit. At most it provides some of the delicate intricacies that make up a wing. What is called reason is no more and no less than a limited way of knowing, a way of reflecting on our experience in the world and fitting it together in a coherent way.

Most importantly, "reason" is not an independent way of



knowing. "Reason" needs to be enclosed in quotation marks to indicate that as a semi-independent way of knowing it simply does not exist. It is entirely dependent on the deepest way of knowing, namely faith, a trusting walk of life.

The Pope too, of course, does not wish to place reason in an "independent" position. It is subordinate to faith. But reason is still considered to be a privileged way of knowing and to in some sense provide a foundation for faith.

Conversely, the Pope links the current "crisis of meaning" and the "crisis of truth" directly to "our present crisis of confidence in the powers of reason."

The insistence on the crucial place of "reason" in relation to truth is, on the one hand, understandable. Reason deals with reality in its most general sense, the Pope maintains, and, therefore, with that which goes beyond what we can see and taste and touch. Reason is a privileged door to absolute truth, truth that transcends time, truth that "confers

a certainty no longer open to doubt."

Yet the privileged relation of reason to truth is surprising in other ways. The Pope's understanding of human beings, even the world, is aptly described as "personalism." Part and parcel of this approach is to underscore the various ways of human knowing. The most basic way of human knowing, as John Paul himself reiterates in this letter, takes place in the "act of entrusting oneself to God," which involves a fundamental decision which engages the whole person." Or, from the point of view of the faith that the church teaches, the Pope insists that what is communicated in catechesis "is not a body of conceptual truths, but the mystery of the living God."

The image of wings suggests, of course, the descent of the dove, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. This Spirit is indeed disfigured when the faith thus inspired is considered to be a matter of merely subjective experience. The Spirit of the Pentecost is the Spirit that brooded over creation, the Spirit who experiences the pain of the writhings of our world and ensures that they are not, finally, the convulsions of death but the birth pangs of a new age.

Faith indeed involves real knowledge of the real world. Therefore the Christian church that abandons the question of truth has abandoned the Gospel of Jesus Christ. In this we stand side by side with the Roman Catholic Church and with this Pope. Yet John Paul II's approach demands a deeper discussion of the crisis that faces our culture, and an appropriate Christian response.

Dr. George Vandervelde is a senior member in theology at the Institute for Christian Studies, Toronto. He has a specific interest and expertise in Catholic theology.